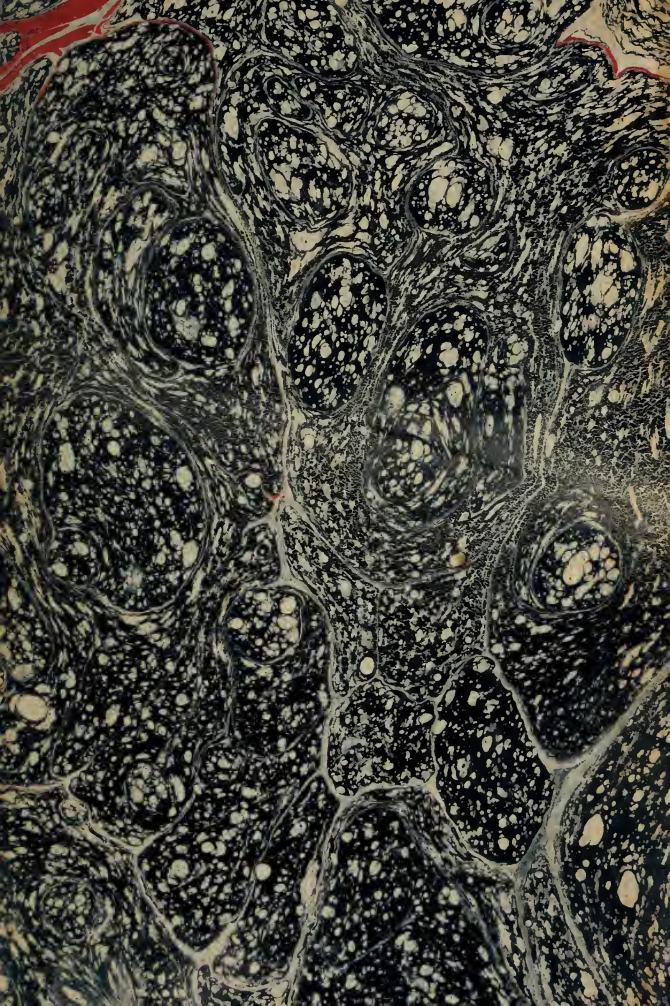






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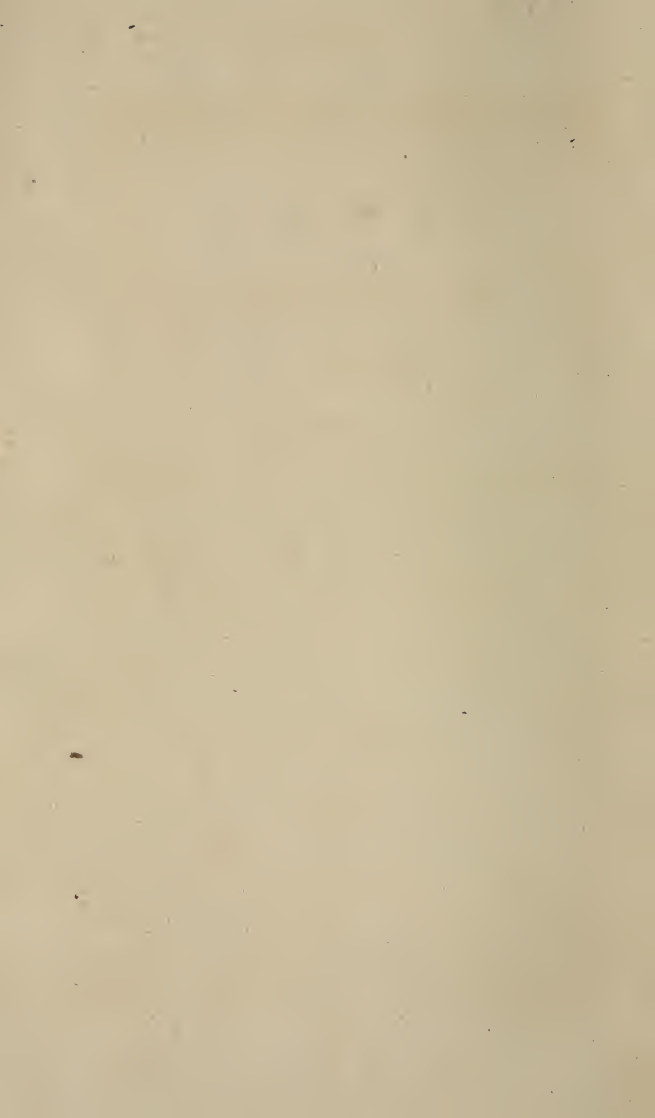


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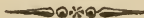
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THE
MYSTERIOUS WANDERER.

A NOVEL:

IN THREE VOLUMES.



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TO THE RIGHT HON. LADY ELIZABETH SPENCER.

BY SOPHIA REEVE.

VOL. III.



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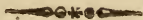
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THE

MYSTERIOUS WANDERER.



CHAPTER I.

“**T**HE sudden death of Sir James Elvyn,” said Sir Henry, “and the deprivation of the fortunes he designed his daughters, you were long since, Captain Howard, informed of by Jarvis; I must therefore commence my narrative from the time those circumstances happened.

“ With her fortune, Eliza Elvyn lost every attraction in the eyes of my grandfather, which could render an union between her and his son desirable; and he accordingly forbade my father to continue his addresses; but, finding his commands were disregarded, he hurried him to Caermarthen, where he endeavoured to enforce my father’s obedience to relinquish Eliza, and address the daughter of Mr. Holly: but as every menace proved ineffectual, and intercepting a letter my father had written to Eliza, proposing an elopement; Sir Horace placed him in the strictest confinement, and, leaving the Hall, put in execution the simple piece of finesse by which he secured the person of Miss Elvyn, and of which you are already acquainted.

“ Sir

“ Sir Horace conveyed her to the Hall, and to a private apartment adjoining his own; where he resolved she should remain till my father’s marriage with Miss Holly was completed. This was prevented by my mother’s elopement, and my father, seizing the first moment of liberty, flew to the late residence of his Eliza. She was gone; but where to, he could not trace! Sir Horace, however, feared it; and, though he had failed in one point, warily executed a plan, which put it beyond the power of fate ever to unite her to him.

“ Prior to his marriage with my grandmother, he seduced the daughter of one of his tenants; and by her had

a son; whom, more from a sense of shame than affection, he had indeed reared and educated; but with a parsimony, which plainly showed with what reluctance he did it. Joseph, however, rose superior to every obstruction the avarice of my grandfather presented, and shone unrivalled in every branch of literature.

“ At college my father first became personally acquainted with him, and, struck with admiration at his amiable qualities and extraordinary abilities, soon felt that friendship he merited; and Joseph, equally pleased at the mildness of my father’s demeanour, so different from the manners of Sir Horace, received and returned his friendship

ship with an enthusiastic affection, that ended only with his life.

“ In spite of every effort of reason, Joseph never came into the presence of Sir Horace, without experiencing in some degree the dread he entertained of him when a child, and which his harshness indeed justified : Sir Horace’s will was an absolute law, to which he had ever yielded implicit obedience, nor was my grandfather’s tyranny over him then less absolute.

“ Joseph was unacquainted with the late transactions ; the last letter he had received from my father, was on the immediate death of Sir James Elvyn, which he knew had deferred the intended nuptials.

tials. He now, with surprise, read Sir Horace's invitation to the Hall; the idea, however, that it was on account of the marriage, and perhaps to perform the ceremony, as he had taken holy orders, overcame his reluctance of being with Sir Horace; especially as he regarded the invitation as a proof of my father's friendship.

“ Greatly was he deceived: for on his arrival he was introduced to Sir Horace, who, after recapitulating the favours he had, or pretended to have conferred, told Joseph he had sent for him to present him with the Corbet living, then vacant by the death of the incumbent; but on the condition that he accepted a wife provided for him. Joseph, recovering from the surprise this unexpected

unexpected donation and overture had occasioned, thanked my grandfather for a provision so far beyond his hopes; assuring him at the same time he would obey his command, if there were the least probability of his proving agreeable to, or liking the lady he had proposed.

“ The lady, Sir Horace said, was perfectly agreeable to the match; she was handsome and good-natured, and he might look on the living as her dowry: and finally gave him to understand he was determined on the match, whether he approved it or not. Joseph silently acquiesced; his heart was unengaged, and, as I before observed, my grandfather's will was a law he had

never dared to dispute.—Satisfied with his tacit compliance, Sir Horace left him, and went to Miss Elvyn, who was little prepared for the peremptory command he gave her to marry Joseph.”

“ I must retire, Henry ;” said Mrs. Blond, in vain endeavouring to suppress the obtrusive tear ; “ recollection is too painful to let me listen to the relation. I will rejoin you by and by.”

Sir Henry kissed her hand, and conducted her to the door ; then, re-seating himself, resumed his relation.

“ Our unhappy friend, who had too fatally experienced to what lengths Sir Horace dared to go, at first strove, by
tears,

tears, to move his obduracy; but his heart was callous; nor, when roused to anger, were her reproaches more regarded. Marry Joseph, she should, he was determined. She gave a positive refusal! She would suffer death first! He had sanctioned Henry's addresses to her; had witnessed and approved their reciprocal vows of affection and fidelity; vows which, however he might then disapprove, it was not in his power to break! Sir Horace's eyes gleamed fury—she would suffer death first—he repeated; then so she should! For from that apartment she should never go alive, except she acceded to his proposal.

“ He left her, and returning to Jo-

seph, told him the presentation of the living should be made out; but as the parsonage wanted a great many repairs, his marriage should be deferred till it was fit for the reception of his bride. Joseph marked the contraction of his brow, acquiesced, and, changing the discourse, ventured to inquire after my father. He was not at the Hall, Sir Horace said, nor did he expect him for some time.

“He was, indeed, searching the country for his Eliza: this Sir Horace knew; and therefore determined, if possible, to force her into a marriage with Joseph before his return; but the resolution of Miss Elvyn rose superior to his harshness and ill treatment; and
at

at the time my father's nuptials took place, she was still a prisoner.

“ After spending some months in endeavouring to find Miss Elvyn, my father, at the positive injunction of Sir Horace, returned to Caermarthen; where he passed the greatest part of his time with Joseph, unconscious that the Hall contained the jewel whose loss he deplored.

“ When Miss Holly visited her brother, to intercede for her niece, Sir Horace again insisted on my father's receiving the fair fugitive as his wife. My father faintly murmured the name of Eliza.

“ ‘Miss Elvyn,’ said my grandfather, exalting his voice, ‘is now the wife of another : she gave her hand to Mallet, Mr. Holly’s steward, and is now with him in France. Read that,’ throwing him a letter, ‘and be convinced.’ ”

“ My father eagerly took the pretended epistle of Mallet; it was addressed to Mr. Holly, and, after apologizing for his abrupt departure from his service, and mentioning some circumstances respecting his late stewardship, proceeded to inform him of his marriage with Miss Elvyn, which had taken place through the friendship of Sir Horace, who had presented him with a genteel competence, on condition of his leaving the kingdom. That he had accordingly proceeded

ceeded to Paris, where he hoped the amusements of that metropolis, and his attentions united, would, in a little time, reconcile his wife to her fate.

“The letter answered Sir Horace’s expectation; my father knew him capable of acting in the manner related, too well to entertain a doubt of the letter being genuine; and looked on Eliza as irrecoverably lost to him; and, my grandfather repeating his commands with denunciations of the heaviest curses if he refused, he yielded an unwilling consent, and two days after attended him to Mr. Holly’s, where he was united to my mother.

“Sir Horace exulted in the success
of

his artifice, and became so attached to his daughter-in-law, that he appeared never to be happy out of her presence. That happiness, however, was soon after interrupted by the severe indisposition of my mother; and Sir Horace not only dreaded losing his favourite; but that my father, should he again be free, might discover and still espouse Eliza, to whom his hatred had increased to a most rancorous degree: he, therefore, took the opportunity of my father's going to visit a neighbouring gentleman; and, sending for Joseph, reminded him of the condition on which he had given him the living, and told him he intended his marriage should take place immediately.

“ Joseph's

“ Joseph’s heart revolted at the delicacy of Sir Horace’s proceedings; but what was his surprise, when he beheld him enter the secret chamber, and peremptorily tell Miss Elvyn she must, that instant, accept the man he had provided for her husband !

“ ‘ Never !’ cried Eliza.

“ ‘ This instant, Madam !’ vociferated Sir Horace. ‘ Henry is married to Miss Holly ; nor will I longer be baffled by your refusal.’

“ ‘ Henry married—O God !’ she ejaculated. At that moment my father, who had returned, not finding his friend at home, entered the outward chamber,

chamber, and saw the long-lost Eliza, sinking at his father's feet.

“ Poor must be the attempt to describe his emotions at that moment: he flew to raise her, and on her revival an eclairsissement, dreadful indeed to him, took place. Sir Horace stamped and raved ; but still declared, she should instantly marry Joseph.

“ This Joseph resolutely refused to consent to ; and severely reprovèd him for the measures he had pursued. Sir Horace did not receive the rebuke unmoved, and was denouncing vengeance on them all, when my mother likewise entered, to inform him the clergyman he had sent for, was arrived. What a scene

scene for a wife, like my mother : Eliza was weeping on the bosom of my father !—there needed no more——

“ Oh, Captain Howard, let me pass what followed ! Sir Horace, finding it impossible to terrify them to compliance, as a last resource, sunk on his knees, and vowed to fix his eternal curse on my father, if they longer refused the marriage he had proposed : and began to pronounce a solemn anathema, when the half-distracted Eliza broke from my father's arms, and throwing herself beside him, implored for mercy on her Henry : she would consent—she would marry Blond !

“ Joseph's horror and agitation were
nearly

nearly equal to Eliza's, nor dared he longer urge denial: the clergyman was summoned, and my wretched father, amidst the taunts and reproaches of his unfeeling wife, was witness to the marriage !

“ This was the last tyranny of which fate allowed Sir Horace to be guilty. Displeased at a letter, he intercepted, from my grandmother to my father, he went to Cornwall, and was severely upbraiding her, when Lady Corbet, who had been some time in a decline, regarded him with a look of mingled anguish and pity, and, extending her hand to him, said—‘ I forgive you, Corbet; but, oh—have mercy on my children!’ then, sinking gently back on her

her seat, resigned her spirit without a sigh !

“ The impressive manner of her last few words, her death, by him so unexpected, struck to his heart ; he felt he had been a tyrant, and had accelerated an event which must shortly happen to himself ; and, for the first time, wished he had been less severe. The expressive exclamation—‘ Have mercy on my children ! ’ still vibrated on his ear : he returned to the Hall, from whence he was summoned to the bedside of Mr. Holly, who died a few days after.

“ This was too much, even for the callousness of Sir Horace : horror filled his bosom ; and his constitution, apparently

rently robust, yielded to the agitation of his mind ; he took to his bed, and for some days experienced torments unspeakable. Repeatedly he conjured my father, who never quitted him, to forgive him ; and at last desired to see Joseph and Mrs. Blond ; but the appearance of the pale, emaciated Eliza, added to his agonies : he struggled for breath.

“ ‘Forgive—forgive me!’ he pantingly cried. ‘Do not curse me ! Oh, Ellenor ! my child, mayest thou find a better friend than thy father has proved !—Send for my lawyer this instant—let me alter my will: for you, too, Corbet !—

“ He sunk in the arms of my father.

“ At

“ At such a moment, could they refuse the forgiveness he entreated? Oh, no ! Death was fast approaching : with a last struggle he seized the hands of my father and Blond, and, joining them, pronounced an emphatic, ‘ Bless you ! ’ and immediately expired !

“ Mrs. Blond was conveyed to the Parsonage, in a state approaching to insensibility : my mother was confined to her apartment ; but chose to be present at the opening of the will ; where my father, though nominated as heir, found himself restricted from assisting his sister, or living separate from his wife, under forfeiture of the greatest part of his property to the uncontrolled will of my mother, already independent

dent by the death of her aunt; or, in case of her demise, from marrying Eliza, under the like forfeiture to a distant branch of the family.

“To Joseph he left two thousand pounds; and the estate in Cornwall, to my mother, in addition to her jointure.

“My father felt not the restriction till the arrival of his Ellenor; but, too well had he proved my mother’s disposition, to hazard the alienation of his fortune from me, who was then about three months old; he therefore conducted her to Blond’s, where she was received with open arms, and settled to her satisfaction, without infringing the clause in my grandfather’s will.

“That

“That my parents were unhappy, was the first idea I imbibed: and as reason expanded, every sorrow they felt caused equal anguish in my heart. No wonder then the settled grief, the pale dejection of my father, rendered him more dear to me, and imperceptibly added to the ties of affection; and oft have I wept at the wayward behaviour of my mother, calculated to make him appear in the eyes of the world as a tyrant: indeed, her pretended gentleness, and resignation to the choice of her father, in company, were only to be equalled by her unfeeling haughtiness and contempt, in private!”

“This is a character, Sir Henry,” interrupted Mr. Talton angrily, “Lady Corbet,

Corbet, I am certain, by no means deserves !”

“ Think not, Mr. Talton,” answered Sir Henry, “ I wish wrongfully to traduce my mother. Hear me with patience, and be yourself the judge.—

“ Pride, delicacy, regard for his child, every consideration, forbade his exposing the duplicity of my mother; and, indeed, had he attempted it—it would but have confirmed the opinion, her deep-laid project had established.

“ As home was truly disagreeable to my father, he passed the greatest part of his time at the Parsonage. His
friendship

friendship with Blond suffered no diminution ; and the society of his sister and Eliza, soothed even whilst it added to his affliction, for the irretrievable loss of the latter.

“ When I was seven years old, I first accompanied him in his daily visits ; and, with Edward, received my instruction from the worthy Blond. The infant Eliza, too, claimed my father’s attention, and, as he traced in her the semblance of her mother, he would indulge a wish that she might one day hail him by the name of father !

“ Thus passed seven years ; when my father showed evident symptoms of a decline ; but not all the entreaties

of my aunt and Blond could urge him to seek medical assistance.

“Cease, Joseph,” he would say, “to importune me. My disease, my brother, is past all but the power of death to remedy.”

“To describe the agonies of my mind, as I saw him sinking to the grave, is impossible: and none but a son in danger of losing such a father, can form an idea of them. At last he yielded to my persuasions to try the air of France, and accordingly set sail for St. Malo’s, attended by Thomas, and two other domestics.

“During his absence, Mallet, who had

had so abruptly quitted the service of Mr. Holly, returned to Caermarthen; and was appointed by my mother to the stewardship of her landed property. This step was highly disagreeable to my father, and he determined immediately to return: the malady of his mind was rapidly destroying his constitution; he entertained no hopes of recovery, he scarcely wished it; and Sister Françoise being at that time liberated from her monastic vows, he escorted her to Plymouth, and then returned to the Hall; where, for the first time in my life, I heard him reproach my mother for her conduct. Trivial as the circumstance was, it not only rendered home more disgusting, but appeared to accelerate his dissolution. At the Par-

sonage only he looked for peace; whither, under pretence of wandering in the grounds, I used to follow him; my mother having prohibited my visits to Blond, and my father, from affection, not wishing me ever to be from his presence.

“At last he became so feeble, as to be incapable of leaving the Hall; and my mother changing her usual mode of conduct, became attentive, and even assiduous about him; so much so, that for three weeks previously to the period which bereft me of the best of fathers, she rarely quitted him, even for necessary rest and refreshment. The evening, however, before he expired, she had retired for a few hours repose, and
the

the attendants likewise quitting the room, my father looked expressively at me some moments, and, pressing my hand to his bosom, said,—‘ The time will shortly arrive, my Harry, when I shall moulder into dust, and you be deprived of him who might almost be termed your only parent. Thy mother—but no matter! . . . Little of happiness have I experienced in this world; and, but for thee, should quit it without regret. Yet remember, Harry, she is thy mother! and, whatever may hereafter reach thy knowledge, let it not for a moment blot from thy mind the sacredness of that tie!

“ ‘ You will be the inheritor of my fortunes; your mother is already well

provided for; but I charge and entreat you take care of my Ellenor, and her son: Sir Horace's restriction reaches not to you: and if hereafter the child of my brother and Eliza should gain your affection, let not her want of an adequate fortune be a hindrance to your happiness; too many have already been sacrificed to avarice. Blond knows my sentiments, and will add a blessing to your father's; he has a copy of my will: the original you will find in——.

“ The entrance of my mother prevented his finishing the sentence, and her strict attention afterwards precluded all opportunity of informing me where he had put his will.

“ In

“ In the morning Blond, as usual, came to visit my father ; and perceiving a considerable change for the worse, consented to remain, till the life he prized above his own, should cease to animate its earthly mansion.

“ Worthy, affectionate Blond ! dear to my memory, must ever be thy behaviour in that awful hour ; when suppressing thy own sorrow, which oft and oft obtruded to thine eye, thou spakest comfort to the heart of thy expiring friend, and supportedst the affliction of a son ! Rest ye in peace, beloved pair ! Together ye trod the rugged path of life : pure and sincere was your friendship ; and death,

c 4

unwilling

unwilling to divide ye, summoned both to the same sepulchre !”

“ The emotions of Sir Henry prevented him from proceeding. At last recovering, he continued.

“ My mother behaved at first with the greatest show of sorrow ; and the tears she shed apparently to the memory of my father, revived every spark of affection ; alas ! I perceived not the tempest gathering over me, and ready to dart its most dreadful vengeance on my head.

“ The day after the funeral, had been appointed for the perusal of the will,
which

which was, my mother said, with other papers of consequence, in a private drawer of my father's *escrutoire*. She desired the attendance of Blond, as the nearest friend of my father; and, at the stated time, the will was produced, in the presence of him, a neighbouring clergyman, Mallet, Thomas, Owen, and the principal domestics; but what was my surprise, to find my mother declared not only my sole guardian, but heiress of every part of my father's property, the entailed estates excepted; and from which I was to have an allowance of only four hundred pounds, annually, during my minority!

“ Indignation sparkled in the penetrating eyes of Blond; whilst he vehem-

mently declared the will was a false one !
‘ Here is a copy of the real one,’ he continued, ‘ which will prove to your shame, Madam, that my noble brother has chosen a worthier heir than his wife.’

“ Quick as lightning my mother tore it from his hands, and the next instant, forced it between the bars of the grate ; whilst, with equal vehemence, she retorted the charge of forgery, and threatened to deprive him of his gown for the nefarious action ! Never before had I seen Blond betray the least symptom of passion ; and as affection for my mother prevented my regretting this deprivation of nearly two thirds of my fortune, I, after the first moment of surprise,

prise, endeavoured to mediate between them; but Blond still declared my father had left me the whole of his fortune, under the guardianship of the elder St. Ledger and himself: and my mother as resolutely declared the will produced, was the real one, and that by which I should abide; and insulted Blond to such a degree, as a mercenary intermeddler in the family, that, unable to bear it, he hastily left the Hall. The speed with which he returned to the Parsonage, joined to the agitation of his spirits, brought on a fever; which indignation in seeing me thus deprived of my rights, prevented him from paying proper regard to; this was increased, the following Sunday, by his getting wet in going to church; where, unable to change

his clothes, he was necessitated to perform divine service in those he had on. The consequence was, that before the end of the second day, he was confined to his bed !

“ During this, my mother, though exulting in the success of her artifice, behaved to me with her wonted show of affection ; but Blond getting hourly worse, at last entreated to speak with me ; and then it was my mother first unmasked herself to me !

“ She peremptorily refused to let me go—the servant said his master was expiring ! I begged, conjured—at last insisted ! But, looking at me with that haughty contempt, she had too often regarded

garded my father with—‘Recollect yourself, young gentleman,’ she said: ‘you shall not go, but where, and to whom I please!—So far at least I can control you. Insist!’ she repeated with increasing hauteur: ‘henceforth, Sir, this apartment is the boundary of your steps, till you have learned to show more respect to the will of a mother!’

“ She quitted the room, leaving me confounded at a behaviour so unexpected.

“ The expiring Blond, however, took full possession of my mind; in him I was losing a second father; and as I could not but regard my mother’s denial as unfeeling and unjust, I determined to
obey

obey the impulse of my heart : but, on trying the door, I found it locked, and, after some ineffectual attempts to force it, I was obliged to desist ; the window, however, presented the means of escape ; I instantly got out, and lightly dropping to the ground, hastened through the plantations, to the Parsonage, where I found my worthy uncle, indeed expiring. As soon as he beheld me, he extended his hand,

“ ‘ Welcome, Sir Henry ! From the answer your mother returned to my request, this was a happiness, with which I dared not flatter myself : nor could I, as she desired, transmit what I had to impart, in writing. The urgency of the moment must prevent my dwelling on particulars : — take this packet, my
Henry ;

Henry; given to my care, by your deceased father, to be delivered to you, on your attaining your one-and-twentieth year, or before if occasion required.—Keep it carefully from the knowledge of your mother; the contents will explain the reason, and in part account for her late conduct: for, the will she produced was forged!—the real one, if not destroyed, you will find in the closet of the secret apartment: your father, Sir Henry, left you the undivided possession of his fortune?

These were nearly the last words he pronounced, as he expired in less than an hour after.

“ I wonder not, my Eliza, at your
tears ;

tears ; and a richer offering than those which spring from filial affection, cannot ascend to the throne of mercy !

“ I shall pass over the distress of our friends at this juncture ; your own hearts may best do justice to their feelings. It was late in the evening, when I slowly directed my steps to the Hall ; where I immediately retired to my own room ; but, a few minutes after, was summoned to attend my mother in the apartment where my father died.

“ I obeyed.—But ah, who can paint the rage with which she addressed me ! After upbraiding me for leaving the Hall, she demanded for what Blond had so earnestly desired to see me ?

“ ‘ Your

“ ‘Your own heart, Madam,’ I replied, ‘may best answer that question. The will produced, he says, was not that of my father.’ ”

“ ‘Insolence unparalleled !’ she exclaimed. ‘Know, Sir, the estates and property I hold, were bequeathed me by Sir Horace. Your father for years supported his vagrant sister, and thereby forfeited them to me !’ ”

“ ‘It is strange then, Lady Corbet,’ I replied, ‘you did not exert your right during the life of my father ; and not make him will them to you after his decease : but you mistake, Madam ; my father never afforded my aunt the least pecuniary assistance, nor can you prove it.

Her

Her maintenance has been at the hand of Blond : he was not forbidden to succour a sister, though my father was.— Why are you agitated, Madam?—Is there not wealth enough for both, without using illegal means to enrich yourself: or did my mother think her Henry needed the severity she has this day shown, to induce his assent to her enjoying the whole of his fortune, had she wished it?’

“ I took her hand; but, casting me from her, she said with increasing agitation—‘ The severity you complain of, boy! is nothing to what you shall experience for this behaviour ! From these windows you cannot escape ; this room is your prison ; and here you may ruminate,

minate, and learn to dread the anger of your mother !’

“ ‘Ruminate indeed !’ I sighed, as she closed and locked the door—‘for inexplicable are thy proceedings.’—But the packet Blond had given me, he said, would in some measure account for her conduct ; to that I resolved to apply, and, seating myself, broke the seal of this, my father’s last bequest.”

Sir Henry drew the packet from his bosom, and, half suppressing a sigh, read as follows :

CHAPTER

CHAPTER II.

“ **W**HEN these lines, my beloved
“ Henry, reach your hands, time will
“ have left only a tender remembrance
“ of the name of father! Yet I trust
“ the affection you evinced for him in
“ life, will make you regard this his last
“ (though secret) request, and advice.

“ Too oft have you heard the relation
“ of my early misfortunes, to need a
“ re-

“ repetition here ; but prepare, my
“ Harry, for a tale you little expect,
“ and which reached my knowledge a
“ few months after my marriage.

“ Some years prior to that event,
“ your mother bestowed her affections
“ on Mallet, her father’s steward ; who,
“ at last, asked her of his master in
“ marriage ; but Mr. Holly refused
“ him with the proudest disdain, and
“ threatened to dismiss him, if he ever
“ again renewed the subject. Miss
“ Holly proved more favourable to his
“ addresses, and at the time Sir Horace
“ demanded her as a wife for me, was
“ in a state advancing to become a
“ mother !”

“ Just

“Just Powers!” exclaimed Mr. Falton. “Do I hear aright? or can I credit the assertion?”

“My father’s veracity, Sir,” faltered Sir Henry, “is not to be doubted; even if my mother’s subsequent conduct had not confirmed the circumstance as true.”

“Proceed—proceed, dear Henry!” cried the agitated Louise. Sir Henry resumed the relation of his father.

“Alarmed at a circumstance which
“must inevitably have exposed her
“shame, she fled for protection to her
“aunt, and by a well-feigned tale,
“not only induced that lady to re-
“ceive

“ ceive her; but to promise secrecy
“ respecting her state, and the place
“ of her retreat: whilst Mallet, dread-
“ ing a discovery of their illicit con-
“ nexion, withdrew to France; and
“ four months after Miss Holly was
“ delivered of a daughter, which the
“ aunt undertook to rear; and, at the
“ desire of her niece, who was wearied
“ of solitude and restraint, waited on
“ Mr. Holly, to intercede in her be-
“ half. He admitted their excuses,
“ consented to receive his daughter,
“ and to bury the past in oblivion;
“ but to prevent her again disappoint-
“ ing him, he informed Sir Horace of
“ her expected return, and with him
“ projected the scheme which plunged
“ me into misery!

“ A

“ A few months after our ill-fated
“ marriage, Mr. Holly’s sister died,
“ leaving the whole of her fortune to
“ your mother in secret trust, as I not
“ two months since discovered, for her
“ infant daughter. But avarice is your
“ mother’s motto, as well as Sir Ho-
“ race’s; to that she yielded, and,
“ smothering every softer feeling, aban-
“ doned the child to the care of its
“ father; and, appropriating the money
“ to her own use, sent a peasant with
“ the infant Louise to Mallet at
“ Rennes!”

Sir Henry was here interrupted by
Louise, who, bursting into tears, said
—“ Ah the dreaded secret is ex-
plained! Oh, Harland, will you not

NOW

now despise the woman to whom you are united? The conduct of her parents must stamp indelible shame on her name!"

"The virtues of Louise," said Harland tenderly, "are all her own, nor can the actions of her parents lessen her for a moment in my regard."

Sir Henry paused a moment, till the violence of her emotion had subsided; then continued:

"The discovery of these circumstances by the officiousness of the woman she employed to transport the child, considerably degraded your mother, in my opinion: had she, indeed, been as amiable as she endeavoured

VOL III. D voured

“ vowed to appear in the eye of the
“ world, she might in time have obli-
“ terated Eliza from my heart; but the
“ pity I had felt for her, as a victim, like
“ myself, of parental tyranny, was then
“ turned to contempt and disgust: she
“ perceived the change, and soon learned
“ the cause, and from that time marked
“ me as the object of her vengeance.

“ Already a favourite with Sir Horace,
“ she easily insinuated herself into his
“ affections, by continual coincidence
“ with his opinion, and the appearance
“ of personal attachment; and the as-
“ cendancy once gained, bent him en-
“ tirely to her will. His anger to El-
“ lenor, which had been gradually sub-
“ siding, was by her revived, and artfully
“ fanned to the greatest height: whilst
“ the

“ the coldness of my behaviour was ex-
“ aggerated, and imputed to the affec-
“ tion I still retained for Miss Elvyn.
“ Enraged at the bare supposition, he
“ made his will, restricting me from as-
“ sisting one, or ever marrying the other.
“ Not satisfied with this, however, as
“ your mother became seriously indis-
“ posed, and fearing I should disregard
“ the sacrifice of my fortune if again at
“ liberty; he determined to accomplish
“ the design he had before projected of
“ uniting Eliza to my brother.

“ The deaths of Mr. Holly and Sir
“ Horace, were followed, my Henry,
“ by your birth; nor till you are yourself
“ a father, can you conceive with what
“ transports I pressed you to my bosom.

“ In you I anticipated a future source of
“ happiness; and as my fondness in-
“ creased, you became with me (be not
“ surprised, my Henry, if chance have
“ not yet discovered it) likewise an ob-
“ ject of thy mother’s indifference---and
“ hatred! But, for your sake, I buried
“ my sorrows in my own bosom; endur-
“ ing every species of behaviour studi-
“ ously calculated to drive me to a sepa-
“ ration; and, could I have been assured
“ you would have enjoyed the property
“ after her decease, I would not have
“ hesitated a moment in my determina-
“ tion; but too well did I know her prin-
“ ciples to place the power in her hands.

“ The return of my Ellenor and her
“ infant, increased the anxiety which
“ preyed

“ preyed on my mind; though I trust,
“ she will do justice to her brother, in
“ believing his heart never for an in-
“ stant coincided with the will of her
“ father.

“ For years your mother continued the
“ same unwearied course of conduct;
“ affecting an outward appearance of
“ submission to me, and affection to you;
“ whilst in secret she rendered home dis-
“ tasteful, and embittered every moment
“ I was obliged to pass in her society.

“ How different the conduct of Eliza!
“ She, though united to a man she did
“ not love, learned to esteem him for his
“ virtues; cheerfully fulfilling the duties
“ of her station, she enjoyed the sweets

“ of friendship, and experienced content
“ from internal rectitude. What a con-
“ trast!

“ The hours I passed at the Parson-
“ age, with friends so beloved, in assist-
“ ing to form the mind of my Henry, I
“ need not recount; but, comparatively
“ happy as they were, they could not
“ compensate for the behaviour of your
“ mother, which at last has forced me to
“ an early grave.

“ At your intercession, I consented to
“ visit France; but receiving intelligence
“ Mallet had revisited Wales, I as hastily
“ returned, and found your mother had,
“ indeed, renewed her acquaintance with
“ this her early lover! Unfeeling---insult-
“ ing

“ ing woman! couldst thou not stay a
“ few short weeks, till death had left thee
“ free to accept the lover of thy choice!
“ ---Yet even this I could have excused;
“ nay, perhaps, have pardoned: but
“ from the private room, I heard them
“ exulting in the prospect of my death,
“ and projecting plans to deprive you,
“ my beloved boy, of your inheritance;
“ but the measures I have pursued, I
“ trust, will render Mallet’s schemes abortive.

“ By this means, I likewise learned that
“ the infant Louise had been deserted by
“ its equally unnatural father, who left
“ it exposed at the Convent gate of St.
“ Ursule. Even your mother, for a moment,
“ reprobated the inhumanity of the
D 4 action;

“ action; till he informed her the Ab-
“ bess had received, and consented to
“ rear the child, as a foundling from Hea-
“ ven; but whether it still existed, he
“ knew not. If it do, (and be it your
“ care, my Harry, to inquire) I charge you
“ to assist the unfortunate girl; yet likewise
“ respect your mother, nor wilfully seek
“ to raise a blush of shame on her cheek:
“ let the consideration, that she is your
“ mother, induce you to pardon what
“ otherwise you might condemn!

“ To you she has ever preserved the
“ appearance of maternal affection, and,
“ should you inherit her fortune, re-
“ member thirty thousand pounds of it
“ was left by her aunt, for the deserted
“ Louise; and to her let it be restored.

“ But

“ But should Mallet, whose hatred to
“ you, I believe, is as unbounded as his
“ influence over her, induce her to be-
“ stow it on himself or others; forget not,
“ my son, she is your sister, and provide
“ for her according to the dictates of
“ your own generous heart; to which, I
“ must likewise leave the care of my
“ Ellenor and her son.

“ Large is the fortune you will in-
“ herit, and the years of your mino-
“ rity will considerably add to it. Sir
“ Horace ever designed to give his
“ Ellenor fifty thousand pounds, which
“ sum, should she be re-united to the
“ worthy but misguided Howard, you can
“ present her with; but should her Ed-
“ ward still be denied the knowledge of a
D 5 father,

“ father, I would have you secure to him,
“ in addition, the estate I purchased of
“ Howels.

“ And now, my Henry, let me men-
“ tion the subject, which, though sinking
“ to the grave, will still maintain the su-
“ periority of hope in my bosom,—that
“ the child of her I once fondly thought
“ to have called my own, may become
“ your wife. With satisfaction, I have
“ perceived your youthful partiality
“ for each other, and cherished every
“ spark of growing attachment. Yet if
“ another should gain your maturer af-
“ fection, Heaven forbid that I should
“ thwart your inclination, or be the means,
“ however indirectly, of uniting you to a
“ woman you could not prefer to the rest
“ of

“ of her sex. Should you, therefore,
“ behold another with the eye of prepos-
“ session, at least, regard Eliza as a
“ sister, and give her a portion accord-
“ ingly.

“ And here, my Henry, let me rest.
“ Though scarcely can I bring myself to
“ resign my pen; but it must be.—
“ Harry, dear beloved boy—dearer far
“ to my heart than life itself, farewell!
“ May every blessing this transitory state
“ affords, fall to your lot, till we meet
“ in those realms where eternal happi-
“ ness rewards the virtuous and af-
“ flicted!

“ H. CORBET.”

“ Surprise and concern,” continued Sir

Henry, as he folded up the packet, “for some time absorbed every faculty. Again I perused the papers, which opened a mother’s character to my view, and which the occurrences of that day had marked as too just. Yet, for what purpose could she confine me?—had she not succeeded in obtaining the estates? at what further then did she aim? I could not resolve the question, but insensibly reverted to the death of my father. The bed he expired on, was before me, my destined couch of rest. Nature revolted at the idea, and revived, with additional poignancy, the remembrance of his last moments.

“ ‘ And Blond too is gone!’ I cried, rising, and wildly pacing the room: ‘ and she who should prove the friend and guardian

guardian of her son, too surely seeks his destruction!—But, perhaps, the will is not destroyed: no one but Blond knew where it was placed.’

“ My mother had secured my father’s keys; but some months prior to his decease, he had presented me with one of the private room; which had my mother known, she would, most probably, have chosen another apartment for my confinement.

“ With a palpitating heart I unlocked the door, and hastily advanced to the closet, where Blond had said it was deposited; but in vain I searched; no will could I discover.

“ ‘Too,

“ ‘ Too surely, it is destroyed,’ I sighed; and at that moment my ear was saluted by the voice of my mother in the adjoining apartment, which, indeed, was her own; and, by the familiarity of her address, soon discovered Mallet to be her companion. I was, indeed, on the spot whence my father intoned overhearing a former discourse. Listening attentively, I heard my mother say—‘ You are wrong, Charles. Confining him in the room where Corbet died, is the only way to effect my purpose. Naturally of a pensive disposition, the recollection of his father, forced on his mind by every object, cannot fail still more to deject him. Could I but find this accursed will, and destroy it, I should not fear him; but as it is—there I will keep him, till I either turn
his

his senses, or have a fair pretence for saying he is insane; which may answer as well. Let me once get the entire management of his estates, it is all I desire.'

“ ‘ I never doubted your abilities, Caroline?’ said Mallet, ‘ but cannot clearly comprehend how you can accuse him of insanity, when the evidence of the servants must prove to the contrary; and as for really turning his senses—your hopes, I am afraid, are rather too sanguine: Sir Henry is soft in heart; not the head.—There is an easier way to settle your pretensions. Were Sir Henry at rest with his father, no one would have a just right to dispute the validity of the present will; which, if he live to come of age,

age, is a thing not at all unlikely to happen.—If he were dead—’

“ ‘The entailed estates,’ interrupted my mother, ‘would go to the heir at law, and I should lose eight thousand a year.—So, no more on that subject, Sir. He is the son of Corbet, of the man I hated; but I will not consent to embrue my hands in his blood, though I should glory in reducing him to the state in which you left Louise!’

“ ‘Well, well, Caroline,’ said Mallet, ‘I yield: if you can accomplish your design, far be it from me to dissuade you from it.’

“ They proceeded to settle their future plans,

plans, and I retired to the outward apartment, in a state nearly answering my mother's wishes.

“ In the morning, Mallet brought my breakfast. I started from my seat at his entrance; his injuries to my father, his villanous intentions toward myself, rose on my tortured imagination, and hurried me nearly to madness! Impelled by the phrenzy of the moment, I hurled my chair at him with the utmost force, and levelled him with the floor! The folly of the action, the moment I had committed it, served to restore my recollection; for would it not aid my mother in her intentions to accuse me of insanity? Mallet, perhaps, believed me then deranged, for, springing on his feet, he with the greatest trepidation

trepidation hurried out of the room. He, however, took care to secure the door, and I was left to reflect on my want of forbearance to one who, I was certain, would not pass by the opportunity of injuring me. My prognostic was right: in less than half an hour, my mother entered the room; her eye glanced with secret satisfaction on the fragments of china scattered on the floor; but, advancing to me, she haughtily asked the meaning of the outrage I had committed? My heart swelled to agony at the question, though certainly to have been expected. I could not avow the motive which had instigated me.—I could not utter a falsehood: and, at last, throwing myself on the bed, covered my face, and found a slight relief in groans.

“ Still

“ Still now do her contemptuous taunts vibrate on my ear, as she told me my new-acquired dignities would not sit graceful on me, if I knew not better how to sustain the character of a gentleman!

“ ‘ They sit not easy on me, indeed, Madam,’ I replied with a sigh. ‘ Would to Heaven, that he who has borne them since my birth, still existed; then should I not want a friend—a parent!’

“ ‘ No more of this insolence, Sir,’ she retorted;—‘ lest you make me forget I bear that title; and remember, it is in my power to prove an enemy!’

“ ‘ It is indeed!’ I repeated. ‘ I had,
at

at the moment, forgotten you gave me birth!

“ She darted a look of scorn and anger at me, and desiring me henceforward to behave with the duty which became me as a son and ward, left me again to the torments of reflection.

“ At noon, Mallet brought my dinner ; and an hour after took it away, untouched.

“ For a week I was regularly served by him, and in that time, by means of the closet, learned that the clergyman who was present with Blond at the reading of the will, had been presented with the Corbet living; though, as he refused to resign the
house

house where he had long resided, Mrs. Blond was permitted to remain at the Parsonage, at least till a proper opportunity should occur of turning her out: likewise, that my mother, wishing to preserve the character she had ever maintained in the opinion of the world, immediately granted her request, that Blond, as he had entreated, might be interred in the same vault with my father.

“ This act of complaisance, however, was soon followed by one I little expected.

“ On the death of Sir Horace, my father, regarding the legacy bequeathed to Blond as far less than he had a right to expect, would have added a considerable
donation

donation to it; but this Blond refused, and was at last, with difficulty, prevailed on to accept a small but pleasant estate, which adjoined the Parsonage lands. This, however, from some neglect, for which I cannot account, but most probably from Blond's unwillingness to receive it, had never been properly assigned to him; though the rent was constantly paid to him, and he regarded as the owner.

“ This estate, my father, a few months before his decease, informed me he had, with one more considerable, left in the fullest manner to his brother. Nevertheless, my mother now reclaimed it and, as no writings could be produced to prove it Mrs. Blond's, basely wrested
from

from her the principal means of her subsistence.

“ Nor did she longer delay the execution of her devices to make me appear insane; but one morning came to the door, and gently tapping, called me by name, entreating to be admitted.

“ ‘ Your Ladyship,’ I replied, ‘ has secured the means of entrance at all times : why then demand it of me?’

“ ‘ What does he mean?’ I heard her say, in a voice of concern, to her maid who accompanied her : ‘ Henry, dear Henry, I conjure you, open the door!’

“ ‘ If you, Madam,’ I again answered
‘ had

‘had intrusted me with the key, I might have complied with your request: but at present would wish to know for what offence I am treated as a prisoner.’

“ ‘Heavens! how wildly he talks!’ she continued to her companion; and with greater energy begged and entreated to be admitted: whilst every answer I could return, was by her artifice regarded as a proof of my insanity by her servant; who did not fail to exaggerate what she had heard to her companions; and in a few days it was believed, that I was actually deranged.

“ I learned the success of my mother’s plan, by my usual channel of intelligence; and for the future resolved to persevere in
silence:

silence; but it was of no avail; and some months passed, during which it was affirmed that my confinement was from my own choice.

“ In the course of this time, I had frequently renewed my search for the will, though without effect; but one day, in examining the contents of a secret drawer, I discovered bank-notes to the value of seven hundred pounds, which I made no scruple of securing; and determined, should an opportunity offer, to leave the Hall, and put myself under the protection of St. Ledger.

“ Providence, in this respect, proved favourable; for, a few weeks after, I was awakened in the night, by a person

moaning at my door: thinking it some new device of my mother, I disregarded it, till I heard the voice of Thomas lamenting the supposed loss of my reason. I then hesitated not a moment, but, springing out of bed, soon convinced him the account he had received of me was false. This worthy servant's joy was unbounded, and he promised to effect my liberation in the course of a week; hinting at the same time, that he suspected his lady participated in the disposition of Sir Horace.

“ Thomas kept his word. He soon discovered Mallet was intrusted with the key; he therefore ventured into his room one night, and perceiving him in a sound sleep, took the key from his pocket, lightly stepped to my apartment, and, with

with an expression of joy in his countenance not to be described, proclaimed me at liberty.

“ Little preparation was necessary; and, bidding my faithful old servant farewell, I directed my steps to the Parsonage.

“ My aunt and Mrs. Blond immediately rose on hearing who it was; and after a short conference, I prevailed on them to receive part of the money I had obtained, as their income was then reduced to little more than one hundred pounds; for Blond possessed too benevolent a disposition ever to think of amassing money. He had truly regarded his parishioners as his children; as such their wants ever found the readiest relief; and to the

stranger his heart, his hand, and his door had ever been open!

“ After an affectionate adieu, I hastened to the church, where, for some time, I indulged in an unrestrained sorrow over the ashes of my father and Blond.

“ The appearance of day at length warned me to retire; and tearing myself from their sacred remains, I ran to the village, where I procured a horse, and thence directed my course toward London.

“ St. Ledger was from home; but I was received with the greatest cordiality by his amiable wife, your beloved sister Françoise, Louise—.”

“ Sister

“ Sister Françoise, my brother!” cried Louise with vivacity. “ Ah, pardon my interruption: but tell me—satisfy my curiosity respecting her.”

“ In a few words, Louise. St. Ledger, the man she was privately united to, was in his youth the bosom-friend of my father: on his travels, he saw and became enamoured of the amiable Françoise; and on her father’s refusing him her hand, prevailed on her to consent to a private marriage. Their intercourse had continued some time, when he was discovered by Monsieur de Colline, and the consequences which followed were as you recited them, from the words of Sister Brigide. Françoise was delivered of a son, who was doomed by the grandfather

to an early grave; but was preserved and secretly conveyed to St. Ledger, by the old confident. This soon reached the knowledge of Monsieur de Colline, who in the first paroxysm of passion, would have sacrificed her life, for the innocent one she had preserved. He spared her, but on condition of her taking an oath, never to divulge the retreat of Françoise to St. Ledger, or to undeceive his daughter respecting the death of her infant; for he well knew that whilst she supposed her child living, she would not consent to retire from the world. Poor Françoise was deceived, and imagining herself bereaved of both husband and offspring, gladly took shelter from the anger and reproaches of her father and sisters, in the Convent of St. Ursule. St Ledger, in the mean time,

time, after vainly demanding his wife of her father, searched the country for some miles round; till, imposed on by a fabulous tale of her death, he, in a state of mind truly disconsolate, returned with his infant son to England.

“ My father went to France at the time of Monsieur de Colline’s death. The circumstances attending the liberation of Françoise were too publicly discoursed of to escape his knowledge, and he immediately proceeded to Rennes, where, introducing himself as the intimate friend of her husband, she joyfully accepted his offer of escorting her to England.

“ Françoise had written to St. Ledger, who, with an impatience equal to his re-

gard for this amiable woman, was hastening with his son to France, to meet her, when my father unexpectedly presented her to his embrace at Portsmouth, where St. Ledger was waiting for a favourable wind, to convey him to the opposite coast.

“ Since that time their happiness has never had the least interruption; except from the hymeneal expedition of my friend Henry. They are, however, perfectly satisfied with his choice of a bride, who, on her part, appears sincerely attached to the parents of her husband.

“ The elder St. Ledger, on his return in the evening, received me with his usual friendship. To him my father had never divulged the secret of his unhappiness; nor

nor could I reveal it: but on his inquiring the reason of my journey to London, I related what had passed between me and my mother since the death of my father, and the means she had used to make me appear insane. St. Ledger listened to my tale with complaisance; but regarded my conduct as proceeding from youthful folly; and plainly told me, he should sooner credit the idea of my insanity, than any thing to the prejudice of Lady Corbet, who, he was well assured, loved me too well, and was too just, wilfully to injure me or any one! He, however, requested I would make his house my home as long as I remained in town; and, at my entreaty, forbore to inform my mother where I was. The precaution, however, was useless, as Lady Dursley accidentally

saw me, and wrote to my mother, who immediately came to London.

“ With our subsequent rencontre at Sir John’s, you are already acquainted. My mother, on her first arrival in town, designed to have called on St. Ledger ; but, understanding he was at his country seat, deemed it unnecessary ; and, having recovered her emigrant, took leave of her friends, and reconducted me to the Hall, where, a few days after, I was again placed in confinement.

CHAPTER III.

“ **T**HE visits of Mr. Talton in some degree restored my liberty : but solitude was then become my choice ; my mind, by constantly dwelling on the waywardness of my fate, became gloomy ; and my wretchedness was farther encreased, by hearing the exultations of my mother, at the subjection to which she had reduced me.

“ Mallet, nevertheless, wished my death,

under an apprehension that I might, one day, discover the means which had been used to defraud me of my possessions ; and repeatedly endeavoured to persuade her to let him administer such drugs as, without leaving any signs of violence, would quickly send me to the grave.— This, however, my mother as often opposed ; and, at last declared, if I died, she would marry Talton.

“ This arrangement by no means satisfied Mallet, whose real motive, I believe, was an idea, that if I were dead, he might persuade or terrify her into a marriage with himself.

“ In the mean time, my mother continued her usual mode of behaviour toward
me;

me ; occasionally allowing me the liberty of rambling in the surrounding plantations, though with two or three servants to watch me, lest I should again attempt to escape.

“ Thus passed more than a twelve-month, when I was taken ill ; I loathed my food ; my strength failed me ; and repose became a stranger to my pillow. Frequently I passed the night in pacing my room ; or, when the moon afforded sufficient light, in contemplating the venerable structure where the ashes of my father rested, or in tracing the different haunts where he had so often attended me in my juvenile rambles.

“ One night, as usual, I deserted my bed, my mind brooding on the ills which
might

might befall my Eliza and her friends, if fate should consign me to the tomb ; an event I thought very likely to happen ;—restless, and not knowing where to fly for relief, I, after some time wandering about the chamber, unlocked the door of the private room ; and, almost unconsciously, advanced to the spot which had afforded me such a source of unhappiness.

“ Mallet was with my mother, and I soon found a disagreement, of no trivial nature, had taken place.

“ ‘—I speak more from a consideration of your safety, Lady Corbet, than my own,’ I heard him say. ‘ I have many resources which you have not ; and—I again repeat it—whilst Sir Henry lives, not only
your

your property, but your life also, is in danger: and, a moment's consideration would make you sensible of what the consequence must be, should Mrs. Blond or Mrs. Crawton seek the protection of Talton. They have eloquence as well as you, nor might even their beauty vainly plead in their favour!

“ ‘ Charles, no more!’ said my mother. ‘ You have instigated me thus far, nor will I now leave half my scheme unaccomplished. If you, Sir, are so easily intimidated—I am not! Let them seek his protection—it will be of no avail. I have Talton too securely in my toils, to fear any application they may make!’

“ ‘ Perhaps not!’ continued Mallet. ‘ I
do

do not like trusting to a chance, when you can proceed on a certainty. What would avail all your fine-spun policy, if Sir Henry should ever discover the will?—Your ruin must inevitably follow; nor will a charge of insanity then avail. With such a proof in his favour, he will soon find friends to support him; and you may then wish you had followed my advice. If he were dead; you would be at least secured in your present property.’

“‘Would then he were dead!’ ejaculated my mother.—‘But it is impossible he should ever discover the will; though where Corbet could put it, I cannot think. But it must and shall be found—and soon too!’

“‘Their

“ Their discourse ceased; but I was too much lost in reflection to remark it; and stood expecting its continuation, when my mother entered my apartment. An exclamation of surprise and dismay escaped her, on beholding the private room open, and anxiously advancing, she discovered me, my head resting against a pilaster, and my hand pressed to my beating temples.

“ ‘ What mean you, Sir?—How came you here?—How dare you enter this room, without my permission?’ she angrily demanded—her eye quickly glancing from me to every part.

“ ‘ The same reason which brings you here, Madam,’ I replied, ‘ first induced
me

me to enter: the hope and expectation of finding my father's will.'

“ ‘Your father's will!’ she repeated.
‘What means the boy?’

“ ‘Not to establish my rights on a mother's destruction,’ I replied: ‘though most undoubtedly to do justice to those she has wronged. Oh, my mother! in mercy, go no farther; nor thus lay up a source of wretchedness for thy latter years. Life smiles gaily now, the meridian of a summer's day; but recollect, that night, however late, must still succeed. Will not my mother's soul then shrink from its glooms, and dread to meet the record of her actions?’

“ ‘Knowest

“ ‘ Knowest thou to whom thou art speaking?’ she cried, darting a look of mingled scorn and fear at me.

“ ‘ To my mother!’ I replied: ‘ and as such let her for once listen to me with patience!—You must be conscious, Madam, I am not ignorant of the measures you have pursued, to obtain the greatest part of my father’s property; neither for what reason you now regard and treat me as an enemy. Believe me, you injure me, if you imagine that for the sake of regaining those possessions, I should ever wish to expose you to the censure of the world. Far from my heart be such a thought! I want not superfluous wealth; for me the fortune inherited from my forefathers, is amply sufficient. Freely then enjoy what
you

you have obtained; by me you shall never be molested. All I ask is the restoration of Blond's property, and the society of my friends.'

" ' Wretches !' she exclaimed. ' You too, I suppose, like your father, would foster the vagrant Ellenor ! But let her, and your friends, as you call them, beware !'

" ' She never injured you, Madam,' I cried ; ' and recollect, she is the sister of the man, to whom you bound yourself by the most solemn ties before the face of Heaven. For myself I plead not ; but as you hope for mercy hereafter, show it to her and the unhappy Elvyns.'

" ' And

“ ‘ And art thou to prescribe to me?’ she contemptuously exclaimed. — ‘ To your chamber this instant, Sir; I shall not apply to you for guidance: and, as you value your existence, dare not again to give such licence to your tongue! — Begone, Sir!’

“ I obeyed; taking the key from the door as I passed.

“ She instantly followed me, and peremptorily demanded it.

“ ‘ Excuse me, Madam,’ I replied, ‘ I cannot yield it. It was given me by my father; and, as master of this mansion, I have an undoubted right to retain it.’

“ ‘ Master

“ ‘ Master of this mansion !’ she frantically repeated. ‘ Never whilst I exist.—Thinkest thou I will stoop to acknowledge thy superiority ?’

“ ‘ Had I not been willing to acknowledge yours, Lady Corbet,’ I answered, ‘ I had not thus long submitted to the restriction you have ordained; though I do not promise much longer patiently to bear it!’

“ ‘ She regarded me with a frenzied eye — ‘ Dost thou threaten too ?—Severely shalt thou suffer for this ! This instant, Sir, deliver the key.’

“ ‘ For God’s sake, my mother,’ I cried, ‘ do not thus oppress me: long
have

have I borne each ill you have inflicted, and nearly without a murmur; in pity, then, spare me; nor thus add to the sorrows of a heart that is already nearly broken.'

" 'No trifling, Sir; my purpose is fixed; nor, by all that is sacred, will I be dissuaded from it! I will not be subjected to your control, or longer kept in awe by your pretensions!'

" 'I do not wish it,' I cried; 'all I ask, is that which, if not possessed by me, cannot devolve to you.'

" She stamped with rage.—'The key, Sir; this moment give it me.'

" 'I

“ ‘ I have already told your Ladyship, I cannot—I will not yield it!’

“ Never before had my mother experienced such opposition from me. Her passions, already raised by the insinuations of Mallet, hurried her nearly to madness; she snatched a pen-knife from the table where I had been writing, her lips quivered as she grasped my arm—‘ Harry—if thou darest again refuse—thou forfeitest thy life!’

“ ‘ Then take my life,’ I cried; the tears starting to my eyes, and so agitated that I could scarcely speak; ‘ when a mother seeks to destroy it, what hand shall be raised for its preservation!—Yet think not by depriving me of existence, to secure
your

your safety. A charge of lunacy may screen the action from the knowledge of the world; but there is an all-seeing eye, Lady Corbet, that would mark it, and make you for ever dread to meet the face of Heaven !'

"She regarded me with an agitation, that too plainly showed the state of her mind, then cast me from her with violence, and hurled the knife to the further part of the room. I was hastening to secure it, when Mallet, either for the purpose of assisting her to search for the will, or from a motive of a darker nature, entered the chamber. He started on beholding me, and, with a well-counterfeited surprise, asked the reason of my being up at such an unseasonable hour?

“ ‘Where the assassin dwells,’ I replied, ‘it is requisite to watch, instead of sleeping!’

“ ‘Assassin!’ he repeated as he advanced; when perceiving the knife in my hand—‘What madness, Sir Henry, have you been attempting? A strait waistcoat I believe will soon terminate your nightly exploits!’

“ My mother here informed him of her finding me in the private room, and of my refusing to resign the key.—‘A circumstance,’ he significantly returned, ‘at which I am not in the least surprised. Your Ladyship will most probably be very soon convinced, that the measures I advised were highly requisite.’

“ My

“ My mother regarded him with an expressive countenance, but was silent, and Mallet continued—‘ It is not yet too late to rectify the error; and as I know the necessity for it, I shall take the liberty of dispossessing Sir Henry of the means of future entrance to that apartment.’ Then addressing me—‘ I have no time to lose in persuasion, young gentleman: if you do not peaceably resign the key, I shall use effectual means to obtain it!’

“ ‘ Never from my hands shall you receive it,’ I indignantly cried: ‘ nor whilst I have life will I part with it. I know the blackened purpose of your heart too well; but Corbet still has a friend, who will deliver him from your machinations.’

“ ‘What mean you by that insinuation, Sir?’ he ferociously exclaimed.

“ ‘Look on this wasting form,’ I replied, ‘and let that answer thee.—Wretch that thou art, could not thy injuries to my father satisfy thee, but thou must also seek to destroy his son!’

“ He did not receive this imprudent accusation calmly, but seized me with a strength I had not power to oppose.—‘Since you have taxed me with such an intention,’ he exclaimed, ‘it shall not be for nothing. Your life has long been in my power, though I have weakly spared it!’

“ My mother called to him to forbear;
but

but rage had bereaved him of all prudence or consideration, and, wresting the pen-knife from me, he attempted to plunge it into my bosom.

“ Quick as lightning, my mother caught his hand, and again commanded him to desist, or she would instantly alarm the family.

“ This declaration recalled him to a sense of his own safety: he sullenly obeyed; but at the same time asserted that the provocation he had received, was more than sufficient to authorise what he had done; and, with many bitter invectives, declared, my insanity should be no defence for offering him such insults!

“ ‘Your excuse, Sir,’ I exclaimed, ‘is too absurd to pass even with a madman; and I am not yet sufficiently bereaved of my senses, to need an explanation of the motives which instigated you to seek my destruction!’

“ ‘Then I will not attempt one,’ he fiercely replied; ‘but boldly say—Corbet Hall cannot—nor shall any longer contain two masters!’

“ ‘My mother regarded him with a look of ineffable scorn.—‘Surely thou too art insane!—Know you not, Sir, where I am, no one shall claim the title of master? and as you value my good opinion, never again dare to entertain such an expectation.’

“ Mallet

“ Mallet was abashed, and, after some moments pause, said—‘ Do I rightly understand you, Lady Corbet?’

“ ‘ It appears not, Sir,’ answered my mother; ‘ or you would not thus insolently assume the privilege of acting contrary to my injunction! But from this time, Sir, learn that I expect implicit obedience to my will: if not—as I have raised, you shall likewise find it is in my power to replace you in your original obscurity!’—‘ To you, Sir,’ addressing me, ‘ I shall only say, that unless you resign the key, I will immediately bring a charge of lunacy against you: nor shall you ever again pass beyond the walls of your present apartment!’—Then ordering Mallet

to follow her, with an air of the sternest dignity, she quitted the room.

“ Mallet knew my mother’s temper too well, to irritate her, by a further opposition to her commands; he therefore slowly directed his steps toward the door, when perceiving she was beyond hearing, he turned to me in a menacing manner—
‘ Next time we meet, young man, your life shall surely pay the forfeit for this night’s adventure !’

“ He closed the door; leaving me in a state of wretchedness surpassing aught I had then experienced. To resign the key, was to yield the only means by which, as I imagined, I could ever hope to obtain
my

my father's will; and would be consigning not only myself, but my aunt, Mrs. Blond, and all who were dear to me, to ruin!—To retain it—or indeed to remain where I was, would be equally destructive; for Mallet, I doubted not, would keep his word.

“ I stood for some time nearly stupified with horror. ‘ Is no resource left to save me?’ I at last sighed, advancing to the window. The morning had dawned, and a gypsy I had two or three times spoken to, was crossing the lawn toward the house. To me he came the angel of deliverance; and, allowing myself scarcely a moment's consideration, I broke a square of glass—for the windows were too well

secured to admit of my opening them—and called to him.

“ He heard me, and immediately approached ; when tying five guineas in my handkerchief, I threw it to him, and briefly telling him my situation, promised him twenty more if he would aid me to escape.

“ He declared himself willing to assist me ; but that he knew not how to effect my liberation. No time, I was certain, was to be lost ; I therefore directed him to an outhouse, whence he procured a ladder, which he placed against the window, and breaking another square of glass, severed the wood-work that divided them ;
with

with some difficulty I got through, and thus, once more, found myself at liberty!

“ I gave him his promised reward, and hastened, as fast as my feeble state would admit, to the Parsonage; where my aunt and Mrs. Blond, on hearing what had passed, urged me instantly to fly; but not choosing to put the friendship of St. Ledger again to a trial, or knowing where else to go, my aunt advised my seeking the protection of her Howard, whose generous heart, and the remembrance of his Ellenor, she doubted not, would render him favourable to my suit.

“ You were then at Yarmouth; for my aunt had constant intelligence of your destinations from the time of your quitting

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ting Brighthelmstone; and refusing the money she would have forced me to accept, I set out on foot for Hay. But my escape was already discovered. Mallet, early in the morning, entered my room, and finding me gone, immediately dispatched the servants in pursuit of me.

“ This I learned from old Owen, and was again obliged to have recourse to the gypsy, who, knowing the urgency of the moment, refused the offer of my clothes for his, without a considerable gratuity. It was not a time to argue or deliberate; I therefore paid his demand, and soon found myself in rags, and with something less than three guineas. I, however, travelled in safety, though reduced to some distress from the lowness of my purse, and

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at last reached the spot, where the benevolence of my friend Frederick relieved me from apprehended danger.

“ I was beginning to recover my tranquillity, when the appearance of Mr. Talton drove me from your protection:—of my subsequent rencounter with the smugglers, I have already informed you. After my escape from them, I worked my passage to Cardigan; where, anxious to see my aunt and Eliza, I proceeded immediately for the Parsonage, secure, as I thought, in my sailor’s habit. The appearance of Mallet drove me to the cottage of Owen, who informed me of the report circulated of my death, and that you, Mr. Talton, had previously to your going to Holland, in my mother’s name, demanded

demanded of Mrs. Blond, the back rents of the lands, my father had attached to the Parsonage, and which my mother had already torn from her possession.”

“ ‘ I now,’ said Mr. Talton, ‘ take shame to myself for the action, to which I was instigated by Lady Corbet, who informed me, Mrs. Blond had in her house a woman the late Sir Henry had kept previously to his marriage, and on whom he had since lavished immense sums ; that, to reward Blond for affording her his countenance, he had allowed him the free rent of the lands ; likewise, that she suspected Mrs. Blond was endeavouring to inveigle you, Sir Henry, into a marriage with her daughter. I cannot say this account agreed with the characters I ever received

ceived of Mr. and Mrs. Blond; but such was my affection for your mother, that I still retained the opinion she had impressed me with. She did not, she said, want the money; but being certain they were the instigators of your elopement, she wished to have them removed to a greater distance, but knew no other means to effect it, without exposing the conduct of the late Sir Henry, which she would willingly avoid. On going to the parsonage, I was introduced to a lady I had never before seen: the beauty of her face and figure, added to the extreme shyness and embarrassment with which she received me, induced me to think she was the mistress your mother had mentioned; and I am sorry to say, I behaved to her with a harshness and severity,

verity, I am now convinced she did not deserve; but I should sooner have discredited the evidence of my senses, than the word of your mother; and scarcely, indeed, can I believe them, in the discovery this day has afforded! But, I beg pardon, Sir Henry; pray proceed."

"Alarmed at the intelligence I received," continued Sir Henry, "I hastened to the Parsonage, and found it deserted by all but Mary, who confirmed the truth of old Owen's report: and that, on the news arriving of my death, they had been obliged to fly, as Mallet had threatened to send them to gaol. Mary wept as she gave me the relation of their distress, and at last said—' Ah! Sir Henry, would to Heaven you had never left the Hall ;

Hall; for I heard old Thomas tell my Lady, if you had staid, and thought of the pannel, all had been well; they should not now have had to regret your death, or been unjustly driven on a merciless world, to seek their maintenance.’

“ Mary knew not the meaning of what she uttered, but, quick as lightning, it brought to my recollection a pannel which concealed a small cavity in a closet, adjoining the library. There, I doubted not the will was placed ! The woman my father loved, my aunt, her Edward, and her on whose happiness I then found mine depended, were wandering without support: and the idea determined me, regardless of the consequence which must ensue, should I be discovered, to
venture

venture beneath the roof I so lately fled from!

“ Favoured by the night, I entered by the servants offices, and got, unperceived, through the library to the closet. Mary had provided me with a small dark lantern, and, with some difficulty I opened the cavity; but again was doomed to disappointment; it was vacant! With an aching heart I closed the pannel, and was going to leave the closet, when my mother and Mallet entered the library. They discoursed on the improvement of an estate he had purchased for my mother a few weeks before; till Mr. Talton's name was casually mentioned, when he asked if she really designed to marry him? and, on her answering in the affirmative, he
endeavoured

endeavoured to dissuade her from it, and to prevail on her to bestow her hand on himself.

“ ‘ I love you, Charles,’ she answered, ‘ and believe your sentiments are reciprocal ; but will never put it in your power to controul me. I am now mistress of a noble fortune ; and you are welcome to partake of it, even if increased by that of Talton. Cease then to repeat the only request I wish to refuse you ; and rest satisfied with the title of my lover.’ ”

“ He still urged his suit, still she peremptorily forbade the subject, and reverted to the newly-purchased estate ; he soon after retired to his office, and my mother entered the closet where I was, for the purpose of writing. Never was
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surprise and horror greater than that expressed on her countenance at beholding me: scarcely could her trembling hand retain the light which exposed the features of a son to her view.—‘It is the phantom of the drowned Corbet!’ she at length faintly screamed. ‘Approach me not! Help—help!’

“ ‘No, Madam,’ I exclaimed, ‘your son still lives! and you may now glory in having reduced him to the state, in which your lover deserted Louise.’ ”

“ I rushed by her, hearing the servants approaching; escaped into the garden, and, scaling the wall, retraced my steps to Cardigan; every hope lost of discovering the will, or ever being restored to my rights.”

rights. Cooler reflection, however, offered a different interpretation to the words of Mary, to what I had at first imagined they implied; and I thought it not impossible, but even probable, that Thomas had discovered the will (as he actually had), and conveyed it to my aunt and Mrs. Blond. But where to trace them—I knew not. I was moneyless, and certainly in danger of being discovered by my mother; and the same precaution they must use to elude the knowledge of Mr. Talton; would, I feared, as effectually conceal them from me. For some days, however, I endeavoured to gain intelligence of them, but in vain; and the powerful demands of hunger, at last, compelled me to engage as a common sailor in a merchantman trading to Havre-

Havre-de-Grace; where, disgusted with the Captain, I left the vessel, and, having an ardent desire to know if my deserted sister was in existence, I travelled on foot to Rennes. My adventures there—my rescue of Louise, I have already related; till the period when Providence directed my steps to L'Orient, where, impelled again by necessity, I engaged to serve in a vessel destined with others to Pondicherry. The day after we reached St. Helena, you, Captain Howard, also arrived there, and fortune, there wearied of persecuting me, not only restored me to your friendship, but discovered to me a sister, endeared to my heart by her misfortunes, before a personal knowledge made me love her for her virtues; yet the recollection of past events, forced continually

tinually to mind by her striking resemblance to my mother, preyed on my heart. I again sunk under it; and, but for the attentions of you, my friends, should most probably, ere this period, have left my mother the lawful possessor of the fortune she now illegally holds."

"Thank Heaven, my prayers were heard for the preservation of your existence:" said Louise: "though, had you, my brother, entrusted me with the secrets you have this day disclosed, Louise would have been your comforter, and, by sharing your griefs, have lightened the sorrow which oppressed you."

"Say, rather, have added to it, my dear girl;" said Sir Henry, "from the
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consciousness of having rendered you as unhappy as myself: and but for the discovery of last night, this of to-day would never have taken place. For the friends we here found, I wished the recovery of my fortune; as indeed with them the means rested: and, had not Providence conducted us to them, should never on my own account oppose her, who, whatever are her failings,—is still my mother!”

The company here unanimously joined in thanking Sir Henry for the elucidation of the mysteries which had perplexed them.

“ Yet has he not related every particular,” said Ellenor, smiling. “ He might have added, that since the deaths
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of his father and Blend, his hand has not only sustained Ellenor and her son, but the descendants of Sir James Elvyn.

“ On your second emigration, my Henry, your mother, not being able to discover you, turned the effects of her rage against us, and sent a peremptory demand, by Mr. Talton, for the back-rents.

This message, which portended our ruin, threw us into the utmost consternation; though, had I entertained a suspicion the lover of Lady Corbet was the former friend of my Howard, I should not have hesitated a moment in discovering myself to him, and appealing to the rectitude of his own principles against the injustice and inhumanity of the claim. Your mother, however, at that time, went to

London, and Mr. Talton accompanying her, in some degree freed us from our fears of immediate distress; but the following morning, Mallet, attended by an officer, entered the room whilst we were at breakfast, and arrested Mrs. Blond for three and twenty hundred pounds, the amount of the rent for seventeen years.— Nor was my unhappy friend treated with either respect or mercy, but, on declaring her inability to discharge the debt, instantly hurried away to confinement.

“ To sue for lenity, I was certain would be in vain, I therefore (trusting to Sir Henry’s friendship, to redress the injury,) paid the money; consisting of my father’s legacy to Blond, which had hitherto been preserved for Eliza, and the money

money Sir Henry had supplied me with, for my Edward's maintenance at the University.

“ Lady Corbet, however, was determined on forcing us from Caermarthen; for, a few weeks after, we were privately informed by a servant from the Hall, that he had overheard Mallet threatening to arrest both me and Mrs. Blond, as joint tenants, for the rent of the parsonage since the death of Blond, and from Mr. Talton's name being likewise mentioned, he was induced, he said, to think that gentleman concerned in the business.— This relation, added to the late occurrence, considerably affected the health of Hannah; and she earnestly entreated her sister to leave the Parsonage, and seek a surer

asylum at the house of Lieutenant Booyers, at least till we should hear from Sir Henry. Mrs. Blond readily acceded to the proposal, and, writing for my Edward to return, we prepared for our departure.

“ At that time Thomas returned from Cornwall, where he had been sent some time before Sir Henry's elopement; and on being informed of that circumstance, and our sentiments respecting Lady Corbet, he declared he had supported my brother, when he took his will from the private room, and placed it in the recess of his closet; but ever supposed it had been the same which was produced after his decease. He undertook to procure it; but could not accomplish his design, till the day previous to Lady Corbet's return;

return; the library being shut up, and Mallet in possession of the keys: an opportunity then presented itself, of entering unperceived, and he found the will, indeed, where my brother had placed it. He immediately brought it to me; when every ardent hope, the discovery had raised, was destroyed, by the report of Sir Henry's death. Thomas's dislike to Lady Corbet being greatly increased by the knowledge of this action, he determined to follow my fortunes, and attach himself to my son as his future master. We accordingly proceeded to Lieutenant Booyers, where the amiable Hannah—her gentle spirit broken by repeated afflictions—sunk beneath this last misfortune, and, a few weeks after, found a refuge from her sorrows in the grave.

“ We were yet mourning her loss, when we were alarmed by Susan informing us, she had seen you, Mr. Talton, alight at the inn.—Not doubting but that you were in pursuit of us, we ordered a carriage from the adjoining village, and prepared again for flight. On Booyers’ return with Ellen, being made acquainted with the emergency of our situation, he consented to accompany us, and we thus set out—Providence our guide—to seek a future habitation. Heaven conducted us to this spot, where happiness has once more become an inmate of my bosom; and where justice, I hope, by the hand of my Howard, will re-establish Sir Henry in the possessions of which he has been defrauded.”

“ My

“ My obligations to Sir Henry, on your account, my Ellenor,” said the Captain, “ I can never sufficiently acknowledge ; indeed every action or account but heightens my admiration and regard. Let me then know, my young friend, how you wish to proceed—and command my fortune and interest.”

“ It is now the subject to be considered,” said Sir Henry. “ Violent measures we cannot pursue. The will my mother produced is forged : think then what must be the consequence, if I commence a process of law against her. No—rather let me rest satisfied with the entailed estates. I would wish to appoint you my guardian, for the remainder of my minority : my mother, at her decease, may perhaps be

just: if not—whilst blessed with the friendship of those I so highly esteem, and as I trust with the hand and affection of Eliza, I shall not only have sufficient to fulfil my father's request, but to enjoy every comfort of life: its luxuries I am content to dispense with."

"I cannot agree to this arrangement," said Mr. Talton: "and if you, Sir Henry, will allow me to be joint guardian with Captain Howard, I may, perhaps, be able to re-establish you in your rights, without the aid of the law."

Sir Henry readily consented, on condition that his mother was not exposed.

"That, Sir Henry," continued Mr. Talton,

Talton, “ I shall carefully avoid. My affection to your mother, first founded on personal attractions, was confirmed only by the appearance of every virtue. Think, then, what must be my sentiments, at the discovery of her real character. I shall respect your feelings, my amiable young friends, nor forget that she is your mother: but these proofs of her duplicity, have raised a sentiment of indignation, perhaps not altogether excusable, against the woman for whom I so lately avowed an ardent attachment: but sooner will I tear the dearest hope, the richest prospect of happiness my fancy could pourtray from my heart, than be an accomplice in wronging her already too much injured offspring!

“ Misled by her insinuations, I regarded the late Sir Henry as a tyrant, and her son, as a youth of sordid unsocial principles! I am undeceived—and here avow myself the supporter of his cause. Lady Corbet shall find, that when led into an error, Talton is neither ashamed to acknowledge it, nor to make reparation as far as lies in his power! Nor do I think it will prove an improper punishment to her, to be deprived of her ill-obtained wealth, by the man she pretended affection to, and would have accepted, with no other view than to increase it. But whether I succeed or not in the act of justice, you, Sir Henry, shall ever find a father in me!”

Sir Henry returned his acknowledgements

ments for the regard Mr. Talton professed; and began to cherish a hope, that all would yet terminate to his satisfaction. The re-appearance of Mrs. Blond added to the pleasure which prevailed: only the bosom of Louise sometimes heaved a sigh, at the disappointment of the ideas she had cherished, of being restored to the arms of a mother.

The messenger returning with the licence, arrangements were commenced for the approaching nuptials. The Captain wished to have secured his Ellenor an ample competence, independent of himself: but she refused the jointure, telling him, with a smile, she would not be restricted to a part of his fortune. They, therefore, agreed to dispense with the de-

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lays of the law, and appointed the following day for their re-union: after which, they proposed to proceed to Mr. Talton's, and there wait the return of Lady Corbet.

Enlivened by genuine gaiety, the hours passed imperceptibly; and the ensuing morning, Ellenor, for the second time, gave her hand to the man she loved: and the transports of the Captain on the occasion, showed how highly he prized the gift.

CHAPTER IV.

A FEW days after the marriage, they bade adieu to the humble roof, which had so many months afforded them a secure asylum ; presenting the stock on the farm, and the furniture, to the peasant, who, with his wife, had proved themselves zealous and faithful servants.

By pleasant journeys, Sir Henry and his friends proceeded toward the seat of Mr. Talton, which, as he had informed the
Captain,

Captain, adjoined to the Corbet estate.—
On approaching the Parsonage, Edward, who was conversing with his father, checked the pace of his horse, and, pointing it out to his observation, said,—“ I can scarcely, my dear Sir, express the pleasure I feel in this return to the scenes of my earlier days. How often have I trodden the spot we are now passing, and plucked the wild heath from its native soil—gayly carolling as the lark soaring over our heads, unconscious of evil, and a stranger to sorrow ! Here, too, the worthy Blond, and my generous uncle, would often join Sir Henry and myself, in our boyish amusements ; and whilst we inhaled health from the mountain breeze, would, from each object and incident, mix instruction with our pastime. Here, too,
I last

I last beheld one of the fairest of nature's creation——."

"Which circumstance," said the Captain, with a smile, "I believe, my son, you remember with as much regret as pleasure. I have, Edward, from the time I first beheld you, imagined your cheerfulness to be forced. Your mother, too, has observed it; and I have wished for the opportunity, which now offers, of inquiring the cause? Make me your confident; nor think, in unbosoming yourself, it is to a rigid censor, but to a father, whose anxiety for your happiness equals—and perhaps exceeds your own."

"I doubt not your indulgence; my dear Sir," answered Edward, after a slight
hesita-

hesitation : “ your heart, I am certain, will afford an excuse for the wanderings of mine. I have, as you justly observed, affected a gaiety I am far from feeling, or hope ever again to experience.”

“ Can you despond,” said the Captain still smiling, “ with such an example as the loves of your parents before you? But who is the fair-one, who has thus gained your affections, and at the same time reduced you to despair?—Is she above your hopes, or in a state of life too far beneath you?”

“ Your questions, my father,” answered Edward, “ add to my distress : I know not who she is? Her state in life, if I may judge from her appearance,

ance, is equal—if not superior—to my own.”

“ And when, Edward,” asked the Captain more seriously, “ did you first see this object of your regard ? Some acquaintance, I suppose, must have existed—you could not, I imagine, become enamoured merely from seeing a fair face ? ”

“ My acquaintance,” said Edward, “ if it deserve that epithet, with this truly beloved girl, began nearly three years since. I was returning, with some of my fellow-collegians, from an evening’s excursion, toward our college ; when a horse, on which was a lady, approached with a rapidity fright only could occasion : the impulse of humanity hurried me to her

her assistance: I caught at the rein, at the moment when, overpowered by terror, she quitted her hold, and fell senseless to the ground. I failed in my attempt to stop the affrighted animal, who darted along with the utmost velocity; but fortunately so far broke the fall of his lovely burthen, that she received no material hurt. I raised her from the ground, and recollection was returning, when a gentleman, followed by his servant, rode up to us; but, to my great astonishment, instead of expressing any concern at the accident, or inquiring if the lovely object I held in my arms had sustained any injury, he broke into violent exclamations of rage at her mismanagement of her steed, and declared she would only have received her due reward, if she had broken
her

her neck! I could not listen to him with patience, but sharply told him—I should have supposed he designed her to meet the fate he had mentioned, by his trusting her on an animal, more fit for the hands of a horse-breaker than a lady.

“ ‘And who, Sir,’ he vociferated, ‘asked your opinion of the matter? Cease your impertinence, or talk to your fellows! For you, Madam, you shall ride this horse for six months to come: and, if you dare, repeat this day’s behaviour!’

“ He then commanded the servant to ride after the horse; in the mean time I endeavoured to encourage the weeping girl, who, however, was too much terrified by the menaces of her father, for
such

such he was, to pay much attention to me.

“ The horse had been stopped by some farmers; and, on the servant's returning with it, her father peremptorily commanded her to re-mount.—‘ Dear—dear father,’ she cried, wringing her hands, ‘ do not insist on it ;—pray let me walk.’

“ ‘ Get up this instant,’ he replied, ‘ and do not irritate me, or my whip shall enforce your obedience!’—He was going to execute his threat, when I lifted his trembling daughter on the saddle, and, taking hold of the bridle, told my companions I would soon rejoin them, then, begging her to dispel her apprehensions, for I would guide her horse, led it by the side of her father's.

“ She

“ She looked her thanks for my care, whilst a faint smile played through her tears ; nor was my precaution useless, as the frequent starts of the frightened animal plainly showed he would again have hurried his lovely mistress into danger, if he had not been restrained by a more powerful hand.

“ Her father, as his passion subsided, I believe, became more conscious of her danger ; for when we had proceeded nearly a mile, he stopped, and, alighting, commanded the servant to change the saddles ; the man obeyed with alacrity, and in a few minutes I had the satisfaction of seeing her on her father’s horse ; that gentleman mounting the runaway steed ; then, with more politeness than I expected

expected from his preceding behaviour, he thanked me for the attention I had shown his daughter : and wishing me good evening, bowed and proceeded on his way. I remained on the spot, my eyes directed after them, till they quitted the road, when I slowly retraced my way to the college.

“ This incident remained, with the image of the lovely girl, impressed for some time on my mind ; but in vain I visited every place of public amusement, or inquired amongst my acquaintance, no one knew the person I described.

“ Time had nearly effaced the circumstance from my mind, when I received my mother’s letter, enjoining me to return

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turn to the Parsonage. I obeyed, and, the day after my arrival, was going to the cottage of Owen, for the purpose of meeting Thomas, when, on approaching the spot we have now passed, I beheld three females, and as many children; one, who appeared by her dress to be superior to the others, was seated on a ridge of rock, caressing the infants; one appeared a servant, and the other, by the loudness of her exclamations and thanks, I discovered to be an object of charity, whom the beneficence of the first had relieved. I approached, and with surprise beheld the features of her I had formerly assisted; but, gracious Heaven, how was every charm improved! She as instantly recalled me to remembrance, and, with a blush which heightened every beauty, rose
to

to return my salutation. At that moment I forgot the purport of my walk—my mother—all but the lovely object before me. In answer to my expressions of surprise, at meeting her in such an unfrequented place, she informed me, she was on a visit to a relation of her mother, who resided not more than two miles off; then, in terms as elegant as language could express, or gratitude inspire, she thanked me for the assistance I had formerly afforded her; enumerated each little circumstance of the adventure, and again repeated her thanks. They led to other subjects: the woman and her children retired toward the village, and the time passed imperceptibly, till her maid warned her it was time to return to the house of her friend. I would have escorted her;
but

but she declined my offer, adding—‘ As I informed you, I am under the care of a relation, whose ideas of propriety are too rigidly severe, to let her pardon such a liberty, should I grant it: and I think you, who so humanely saved my life, would not wish, even for a moment, to render that life unpleasant or unhappy.’

“ I could urge no farther, and with a smile which nearly compensated for her refusal, she presented her hand as she bade me farewell.—My peace fled with her! Each look, each word, her vivacity, the animation which sparkled in her eyes, were all impressed on my heart—and too deeply to be ever effaced!

“ The moment she disappeared from

my sight, I regretted that I had not asked her name; hope, however, whispered I might soon again behold her, and, after vainly endeavouring to catch a glimpse of her between the distant trees, I recalled to mind the cottage of Owen, to which I then directed my steps. Thomas soon joined me, and with the highest exultation of joy, informed me he had obtained the will of my deceased uncle ! I hugged the worthy old man in my arms, and with quicker steps than I went, returned with him to the Parsonage.

“ The transports of my mother and Mrs. Blond nearly equalled those of Thomas, and joyfully did we anticipate the return of Sir Henry, and his restoration to the honours of his house: but
short-

short-lived was our promised happiness! The next morning Thomas returned, and with the bitterest exclamations of sorrow, delivered the account of his death.

“ Wretched indeed were the moments which succeeded this intelligence; for, in him, we had lost our only protector against the wiles of Lady Corbet: the return of Mr. Talton added to our apprehensions, and the next morning we privately quitted the Parsonage. My expectation and hope of again beholding this enchanting girl, were thus destroyed: in my mind she is ever present; but, from that period I have never beheld her.”

“ Your heart, Edward,” said the Cap-

tain after a pause, “ I am afraid, has been too susceptible : yet my love for your mother was as sudden, and equalled that of yours for this fair Unknown. You are, however, returned to the most probable place to gain intelligence of her ; if, as she said, she have relations residing so near Mr. Talton. Seek and inquire after her ; and if you find—and she prove worthy of you, neither fortune, nor your father’s consent, shall be wanted to ensure your happiness.

Edward thanked his father with a vivacity he had rarely before shown ; adding—
“ Often have I wished to acquaint my mother with my predilection for this Unknown, and intreat her permission to seek her ; but, the difficulties we have been involved

volved in, her fear of being discovered, and her superior fear that I should quit her maternal arms to seek a father (whom I knew not, till the report of Sir Henry's death, to be in existence), has repeatedly checked the confidence I ever designed to place in her."

They continued conversing, till Mr. Talton inquired the cause of their desertion; when they hastened to rejoin him, and soon after arrived at the seat of that gentleman; where they received intelligence that Lady Corbet had returned to the Hall the preceding day.

She had, indeed, been informed, when near London, by a gentleman, whom she accidentally met, and who was personally

acquainted with Sir Henry, of his seeing him at Bristol with Captain Howard ; she, therefore, gave up the idea of going to London, and immediately proceeded to Bristol, where she learned, the Captain had some time since gone on an excursion into the country ; but to what part no one could inform her. Perplexed at this account, and fatigued with her journey, she resigned her first intention of pursuing Sir Henry, and resolved to return to the Hall ; as the vigilance of Mr. Talton, she doubted not, would soon recover her son, without her immediate assistance in the search. To her great astonishment, a few days after, she was informed Sir Henry was a visitant at Mr. Talton's ; and, unable to reconcile the circumstance with that gentleman's professions of attachment to herself,

self, wrote to him, to request the favour of an interview."

" I shall certainly comply with her Ladyship's desire," said Mr. Talton, on perusing her note; " as I hope, by alarming her with a pretended recourse to justice, I shall induce her to resign the estates of Sir Henry; and, as witnesses may be proper, shall beg the attendance of you, Howard, and Lieutenant Booyers."

These gentlemen readily assented; but before they were prepared for their departure, perceived her Ladyship's equipage advancing up the avenue. Sir Henry started on beholding it.

" Would to Heaven," he cried, " this
H 4 inter-

interview were over! I think, Mr. Taltón, I had better retire."

" Louise, my love," said Harland, " let me conduct you to your apartment. Your pallid looks convince me, an interview with your mother ought not now to take place."

" No, Harland," answered Louise, " let me stay. Long have I ardently wished to be blessed with the sight of her who gave me being; to hear the voice of a parent, though circumstances forbid my hoping to receive a blessing: then, I entreat you, let me stay. Believe me, if I tremble, it is for her; unprepared to answer so serious an accusation; to meet those she has so greatly injured!"

Har-

Harland reluctantly consented.

“ You can stay, my dear girl,” said Mrs. Blond; “ but, as my presence is not necessary, I shall beg leave to accompany Sir Henry :” and a servant then announcing the arrival of their visitant, she took Sir Henry by the arm, and hastily quitted the room.

With that innate elegance which marked her demeanour, Lady Corbet entered the drawing-room : the appearance of such an unexpected party, for a moment checked the smile which played on her lips; but, quickly recovering herself, she informed Mr. Talton of the report which had reached her, and begged to know if Sir Henry were actually under his roof, or if it were

the appearance of the youth she beheld, which gave rise to the rumour?

“ I do not wonder at your Ladyship’s perceiving the resemblance of Captain Howard’s son to Sir Henry,” said Mr. Talton; “ it is indeed an uncommon one. But this young gentleman is too well known in these parts, although you, Madam, never before beheld him, to be mistaken for Sir Henry, who, as you have been informed, is certainly in my house. It was my intention to have waited on your Ladyship, as I have a circumstance of some importance to unfold: the present period, however, may answer as well; and, as Sir Henry has chosen me his joint-guardian with Captain Howard, we will, if you please, come to the point at once.”

Lady

Lady Corbet bowed, and Mr. Talton continued—"Disagreeable is the task I have imposed on myself: but, as I think it my duty to make reparation, as far as lies in my power, for the injuries I have, however unintentionally, committed; your Ladyship must pardon me for espousing a cause, which will prove so detrimental to yourself."

"I cannot comprehend, Mr. Talton," interrupted Lady Corbet, "to what you allude; and will thank you to come, as you said, to the point at once. My son, you inform me, has chosen you his guardian: I would wish to know from what motive; or what induced you to accept the trust?"

“ To reinstate him in his rights, Lady Corbet,” answered Mr. Talton; “ of which, I am sorry to say, you have deprived him.”

“ This is an accusation, Sir,” said Lady Corbet, haughtily rising, “ you have no right to make; and an insult I did not expect from you.”

“ I do not wish to discompose you, Madam,” said Mr. Talton, coolly; “ pray be seated. This accusation, though of a most serious nature, is not the only one I have to offer. Injuries designed against myself I can pardon; but, not those you wished to make me the instrument of committing toward others. But this is deviating from the principal charge—your Ladyship,

ship, I presume, is conscious the will produced, and by which you hold the possessions of the late Sir Henry, is a false one?"

"I can now pardon the treatment I have received," answered Lady Corbet, recovering her composure. "My unhappy son, I perceive, has been relating a tale, originating in his own distempered imagination: yet, surely, you might have acted with greater delicacy, than to accuse me thus in company, even had you, my friend, supposed the improbable account to be true."

"It is past supposition, Lady Corbet," said Mr. Talton: "proofs have confirmed its truth. As for Sir Henry being insane, the idea is absurd: although, I acknowledge,
the

the treatment he received at your hands, was more than sufficient to have deprived an indifferent person of their senses, much less a son, who ought to have expected a different conduct in his mother!"

"Conduct!" repeated Lady Corbet. "I know not, Sir, what you would insinuate: but my conduct as a mother, and in every respect, will bear any scrutiny you can make!"

"It must soon be brought to the proof," said Mr. Talton; "though I greatly fear it will not stand the test!"

"What mean you, Sir!" exclaimed Lady Corbet, exalting her voice. "I would not have you imagine, because I
have

have demeaned myself, by permitting an intimacy, that you are authorised to treat me with this freedom! Lady Corbet, Sir, believe me, will not be insulted with impunity!"

"Have you not deserved this treatment, Lady Corbet?" asked Mr. Talton solemnly. "Nay more!—Look round this circle—here are more than one to prove the injustice of your conduct. This Lady, you falsely informed me, your husband kept previously to his marriage—an abandoned mistress: and, as such, did you not drive his sister destitute on the world?—Demeaned by my acquaintance!—There sits a living proof of that existing between yourself and the Steward of your father. This young lady was left an infant at
Rennes,

Rennes, nearly twenty years since, by Mallet; and is, as I have been informed, the daughter of her whom I am now addressing, and entitled to the sum of thirty thousand pounds, bequeathed in trust to you, by the late Miss Louisa Holly! I mention these circumstances, Madam, just to convince you—”

“ Spare—spare my mother!” shrieked Louise, wringing her hands, “ I want no fortune! Force not a parent’s curses on my head!”

“ Compose yourself, my Louise,” said the alarmed Harland; “ and let consideration for your husband calm these transports!”—But, breaking from his arms, she threw herself at the feet of the apparently

parently horror-stricken Lady Corbet; clasped her hand to her bosom, and, faintly murmuring—"Oh my mother!" sunk insensible on the floor.

She was immediately conveyed from the room by her husband, followed by Mrs. Howard, Ellen, and Eliza. Mr. Talton's agitation, which he in vain strove to conquer, prevented his immediately proceeding; but, the Captain perceiving Lady Corbet recovering from her surprise, said,

"I believe, Madam, you will no longer wonder at Mr. Talton's becoming, with me, the guardian of your son; who, at length, has consented to commit his cause to the decision of justice: and, the ensuing term, will commence a suit, which, I am
afraid,

afraid, will render you an object of abhorrence in every worthy heart."

"And who art thou?" asked Lady Corbet, scornfully, "or by what right dare you impute these crimes to me—or threaten me with an appeal to justice? The estates—the property I hold—are mine; nor can you deprive me of them. By the will of my husband I hold them; and, protected by the law, I will enjoy them!"

"The will you hold them by, Madam," repeated Mr. Talton, "is a false one! and so it shall be proved, to your utter confusion!"

"Assuredly," cried Lady Corbet, "I
ought

ought to discredit my senses, which tell me it is Talton who addresses me; or, you, perhaps, my good friend, are affected by the phantasms of your new ward! I can prove him insane from the evidence of my servants; think then, what weight his accusation will have in a court of judicature!—But, if the will, which awarded this property to me, be false—where, Sir, is the real one?—Produce it!—and by that, if you can, prove the illegality of my tenure!”

“As I told you, Madam,” said Talton, “neither proofs—nor witnesses, substantial ones too, are wanting. To oblige Sir Henry, who does not forget you are his mother, though you have proved unmindful of that tie, I should have waited on you,
that

that you might not be unprepared for the charge : for there are many circumstances, too tedious to be now discussed, which must be explained in a court of justice ! The real will of the late Sir Henry is found, and now in my possession : from whence it will pass to that of the Lord Chancellor ; together with a packet, likewise of your husband's writing, containing an account of your proceedings and conversations with your favourite, Mallet ; which he overheard, by means of a closet in the private room adjoining your apartment ; and by which means, the present Sir Henry is likewise well informed of every artifice you have used to make him appear insane, and your intentions to have destroyed the will, could you have discovered it !"

He

He was prevented from proceeding, by the horror which appeared in the countenance of Lady Corbet. An universal trembling seized her frame, and, had not the Captain supported her, she would have sunk on the floor: he replaced her on the settee, and when she had in some degree recovered from this agitation of guilt and fear, he said: — “ A candid confession on your part, Lady Corbet, with the restoration of the property bequeathed Sir Henry, by his father, are the only means to avoid the ruin which threatens you. It is not my wish, nor Mr. Talton’s, far less Sir Henry’s, to bring his mother to a public trial; but justice, either by your hand or ours, shall be rendered him! If you refuse to afford it him — all shall be discovered!”

“ All

“ All is discovered!” cried Lady Corbet, distractedly. “ But never shall Henry triumph over me, in a court of justice! No—sooner shall my own hand plunge me into eternity!”

“ Little are you prepared for so serious a change,” said Talton. “ You may fly from the accusations of a son, but would meet those of a husband, injured in every respect, before a Being from whom there is no escape: and whose justice, though blended with mercy, is equal to his power! Rather, Lady Corbet, endeavour to atone for your past actions, and by a life of repentance, seek that mercy, you at present so little deserve!”

This address, delivered in a manner,
equally

equally solemn and affecting, appeared to increase the horror of Lady Corbet.

“ Louise, too ;” she faintly articulated ; — “ would I had not seen her ! But no matter, there is still a resource ! ” — She burst into tears ; then, after a moment’s pause, hastily continued — “ I presume, Sir, you have nothing farther to communicate, and I am now at liberty to depart ? ”

Mr. Talton bowed, and ringing the bell, Lady Corbet, in a state approaching nearly to derangement, followed the servant to her carriage, and returned to the Hall.

CHAPTER V.

MR. Talton silently paced the room, some minutes after her departure ; he had gained the triumph over his feelings in this interview, but, he felt, too dearly, and would cheerfully have resigned half of his fortune, had Lady Corbet proved herself as amiable as he formerly thought her. He was soon joined by all the party, except Louise, who was too ill to leave her apartment ; and Sir Henry being anxious to know the particulars of the interview,

re-

requested him to recount what had passed. Mr. Talton instantly complied.

“ Forbid it, Heaven,” Sir Henry ejaculated, as he concluded, “ that she should meditate suicide ! Never more should I experience a moment’s happiness ! Sooner would I embrace the most abject poverty, than enjoy a state of affluence by driving a mother to self-destruction !”

“ I do not apprehend her Ladyship will commit any act of desperation on herself,” said Mr. Talton : “ but rather, as I intended by alarming her, endeavour to escape from justice, by resigning your possessions.”

He was right in his conjecture : Lady

Corbet, justly alarmed at the discovery of her guilt, and dreading the power of that justice she pretended to despise, immediately on her return to the Hall, summoned Mallet, and, informing him of what had happened, ordered him to repair to London, and withdraw her property, amounting to nearly fourscore thousand pounds, exclusive of Louise's fortune, from the funds, and follow her to France.

Mallet by no means approved of her precipitation:—"I wish your safety, Lady Corbet," he answered, after a pause; "yet reflect before you determine on flight. Did Talton produce the will?—No! Then may not this accusation be a plan to entice you to confess what, I grant, they may suspect, but cannot prove! Where—or
how

how should Talton have obtained the will? Sir Henry possessed it not when he quitted the Hall, or this claim would have been made sooner. But even supposing this account of their having it to be true, (which I can scarcely credit), may there not be means to get it from their possession? — Reflect a little, Caroline, and if you can keep—there is no occasion to throw away so much property.”

Lady Corbet hesitated—“If I can keep—Charles: but impossible! Talton too surely has the will: he is not a man either to trifle or be trifled with. Yet how—where—or when he could obtain it—

“Is at present,” interrupted Mallet, of very little consequence. Had the mea-

tures I advised been pursued, this would never have occurred: but as it is—all I can say is, if he really have it, means must be found to get it from him.”

“ Impossible—impossible, Charles!”

“ Why so, Lady Corbet? Consent to give me your hand if I succeed, and trust to my management for the obtaining of it—if in his possession.”

“ I do consent!—I will consent to any thing,” answered the agitated Lady Corbet, “ on the condition you have named!”

“ But one question, then,” said her crafty lover: “ Where does Talton keep his papers of consequence?”

“ In

“ In a cabinet, which stands in his chamber. But wherefore do you ask?—What means do you propose to pursue?”

“ Forcible ones,” replied Mallet, “ if I find them requisite.”

“ Let them be prudent, cautious, and expeditious,” said Lady Corbet, emphatically : “ and if danger await me, be quick as fear itself to give me intelligence !”

They separated ; and Mallet, his head teeming with various projects, proceeded toward Mr. Talton's. On approaching the house, he perceived the servants were assembled in their own apartment ; he, therefore, confidently entered

by one of the lower windows, and, being well acquainted with every room, hastened to that Lady Corbet had mentioned. His heart beat with malicious pleasure on beholding the cabinet ; and, securing the door, to prevent discovery, he lightly advanced, and with trembling impatience attempted to open the drawers. All, however, were secured ; he then tried various keys, but without effect ; and being certain no time was to be lost, resolutely applied a chissel he had brought, and forced the lock of the principal drawer. He looked not far for the will ; the hand-writing of the deceased Sir Henry soon met his view, and, hastily securing his prize, he, with an exulting heart, was retreating from the chamber, when Sir Henry, who with Harland, had left the drawing-room to
visit

visit Louise, returned from her apartment. The figure of Mallet caught his eye, and the appearance of the cabinet forced open as instantly disclosed the reason of his being there. Sir Henry sprung to oppose his escape, and seizing him by the collar, demanded the restitution of the writings he had so feloniously obtained. Rendered desperate by this unexpected discovery, Mallet, after vainly struggling for liberation, drew the chissel from his pocket, and aimed a stroke at the bosom of Sir Henry.

It was too well directed to have failed in its effect, and Sir Henry must inevitably have fallen a victim, had not Harland, surprised by his exclamation, hastened from his wife's apartment, and,

perceiving his danger, torn the destructive weapon from the hand of the assassin !

Mallet was still endeavouring to force his way from Sir Henry, when Mr. Talton and the Captain, surprised at the scuffle, hastened to the spot, followed by Frederick, Edward, and several of the servants, who had likewise been alarmed. The cause was soon explained, and Mallet effectually secured ; he was then searched, and the will, with the packet written by the deceased Sir Henry, produced.

“ Lady Corbet, I find,” said Mr. Talton, “ is resolved to tear her image from my heart ! By heavens ! this last action exceeds all I could ever have supposed a woman, and a mother, could have

have been guilty of!—For you, Mallet, your life shall answer for this outrage!”

This last sentence, pronounced with uncommon energy, reached the ear of Louise, who rushed into the passage.—“He is—he is my father,” she cried in a voice of anguish. “Oh, for my sake, have mercy!” She threw herself at the feet of Mr. Talton, who, with Sir Henry and Harland, endeavoured to raise her from the floor, as the former said—“He has attempted the life of your brother, Mrs. Harland. But retire to your chamber, this scene is not fit for you.”

Harland would have borne her away; but, with the wildest screams, she broke from him, and threw her

arms round the neck of Mallet, who appeared as much confounded at her claim, as at the discovery of his preceding action.

“ I am your Louise,” sobbed his agitated daughter ; “ her whom you left at the gates of St. Ursule.—Will you not speak to me, and say you are my father ?”

“ The name of father,” answered Mallet sullenly, “ affords no pleasure to me, but has given a stab to my heart, I never thought to have experienced. Neither, I think, can it be gratifying to your ears, if you recollect the treatment you have received at my hands. If you wish, however, to show yourself my daughter, remind Sir Henry it is not in my power or your mother’s now to injure

injure him. I am at his mercy ; but I do not expect to find it."

Louise turned a tearful eye to Sir Henry. —“ My brother !” plaintively escaped her lips, and falling on his bosom, she wept in silence.

“ Compose yourself, my dear girl :” said Sir Henry : “ the tears of Louise can never plead in vain !—Go, Sir,” he continued, addressing Mallet, as he unfastened the cord which confined him.—“ For Louise’s sake, you are free : and that this evening’s transactions may teach you a useful lesson, take with you the forgiveness of the man you would have deprived—even of life !”

“ I will not oppose your generous sentence, Sir Henry,” said Mr. Talton; “ but if you, Mallet, be found in this part of the country to-morrow—the next morning, notwithstanding Sir Henry’s clemency, you shall certainly be the inmate of a prison.”

Louise wrung her hands, and again burst into tears; whilst Mallet’s brow assumed a deeper gloom: but, as he passed her, he said—“ This is, most probably, then, Louise, our last interview. As the merit of my release rests with you, may a better blessing than mine be your reward!” He descended the stairs, followed by Mr. Talton and the servants; whilst Louise, satisfied by his liberation and benediction, yielded to Harland’s entreaties,

entreaties, that she would retire to her own apartment.

In the mean time, Mallet retraced his steps to Corbet Hall; one moment furious from the loss of the prize he had obtained; the next, overwhelmed with shame at his detection. Unwillingly he approached Lady Corbet, who awaited his return with the utmost anxiety and impatience; eagerly her eyes glanced to catch intelligence from his; they sparkled not with exultation—"What hopes—what success—what fortune—await me?" she hastily interrogated. "Your only hopes—are in flight!" answered Mallet, churlishly. "Sir Henry has, indeed, the will to produce, with the packet Talton mentioned." He then recounted what had
passed;

passed : but, when Lady Corbet learned, the will had actually been in his possession, and that he had neglected to destroy, the moment he obtained it, her rage exceeded the power of restraint.

Mallet listened impatiently to her reproaches ; and at last said—" The best concerted schemes, Caroline, may sometimes be rendered abortive ; nor can I in the least reproach myself for the failure of this. But, it is useless wasting time in words, which ought to be employed in making preparations for a safe retreat ; and, as our affairs are situated, the sooner we depart the better."

" But for your foolish prevention, Sir," said Lady Corbet, " I should, ere this
time,

time, have been beyond the reach of Talton: but you, forsooth, must raise hopes—only, by a futile project, to dash them more forcibly to the ground, and make me more sensibly feel the loss of wealth and honour, by reflecting, you had it in your power—but neglected—to secure them to me!”

She left him with increasing anger, yet with every fear awake to apprehended danger. She, therefore, packed up jewels and money to a considerable amount; and, a little after midnight, set out for Pembroke; leaving Sir Henry to establish his rights as he thought proper.

In the mean time, Sir Henry experienced a state of anxiety and wretchedness,

ness, little inferior to Lady Corbet's. He had given the power of acting as they wished, into the hands of Mr. Talton and the Captain: his mother, they had promised, should not be exposed: but, he feared, this last disappointment of her plans, and discovery of her principles, might, indeed, instigate her to some act of desperation.

His apprehensions were relieved the next morning, when the following laconic letter was delivered to Mr. Talton:—

“ Tell my unnatural son, he never
“ shall triumph over the fall of his mother!—By the time this reaches your
“ hands, I shall have bidden an eternal
“ adieu to England; to seek a retreat
“ where

“ where I may securely laugh at, and
“ despise both him and the power of justice.
“ tice.

“ As Louise’s offence of appearing in
“ my presence, I believe, was unintentional, tell her, I forgive her—and,
“ some years hence, may, perhaps, be induced to remember I am her mother.

“ CAROLINE CORBET.”

The satisfaction of Sir Henry’s friends at this event, so much more favourable than they had expected, could be equalled only by his own, at the disappointment of his fears, respecting his mother. Cheerfully he returned their congratulations; till Mr. Talton reminded him, it was requisite he should go to the Hall, and examine into the state of his affairs. A carriage was

was accordingly ordered, and Sir Henry, accompanied by Mr. Talton and the Captain, took possession of his paternal habitation. On inquiring after the retreat of Lady Corbet, the housekeeper informed them, she had left the Hall, unattended, and in a hired carriage; and that Mallet was likewise gone—they knew not whither.

The tenantry were then assembled; who with satisfaction admitted the justice of his claim, and openly rejoiced at their young landlord's succession to the fortunes of his father. On examining the accounts of Mallet, Sir Henry was induced to coincide with Mr. Talton's opinion, that his mother had not left England unprovided for; and knowing that his father, at his
decease,

decease, had money to a considerable amount, in the Caermarthen and Pembroke banks, immediately agreed to his guardians proposal, of going to those places, that he might be certified what property he had still remaining. Accordingly, writing to his friends at Mr. Talton's, to acquaint them with their proceedings, they set out for Pembroke.

Whilst Sir Henry and his guardians were thus employed, Edward, authorised by the previous approbation of his father, commenced his inquiry after the fair Unknown. Nor was the heart of Frederick more at ease than Edward's : from the time he beheld Ellen at the grave of her aunt, he had cherished a secret attachment.

tachment. Restrained, however, by the consideration of his dependent state, he would have refrained from an avowal of his love; but, unused to disguise, the secret of his heart escaped him: nor could the artless Ellen conceal the delight which sparkled in her intelligent eyes at the declaration; yet a moment after saw them suffused in tears.

“Prudence, Frederick,” she timidly answered, “must forbid your encouraging any sentiments of regard for me. I am an orphan, and, though not friendless, poor in the extreme!”

“I am equally poor, Ellen,” said Frederick; “for I have no certainty but my commission, and might term myself an orphan,

orphan, like you, for any consideration I expect from my parents. Yet, in a few years, promotion may place me in independence. I have a real and generous friend in my uncle, though I have no right to expect—nor do I—that he should deprive Edward of any part of his property on my account. I am a sailor, and must fight for fortune; and cheerfully could I face every danger my profession exposes me to, if assured the hand of Ellen would at last be my reward.”

“ My uncle, Frederick,” she replied, must here direct my conduct,—if he approve, Ellen will not oppose your wishes. I want not grandeur in my establishment for life; but will never marry, to involve the man I esteem in difficulties,
which

which may destroy—instead of securing—his happiness.”

“ Such were my hopes, and such the answer of my Hannah !” said Lieutenant Booyers, entering from an inner apartment, “ May your fate, my children, prove more fortunate than hers and mine ! Frederick, I esteem and respect you ; nor know I the man, on whom I would sooner bestow my Ellen—the only treasure I now can boast. You certainly are entitled to a provision from your father, equally with his other children: if he will settle five thousand pounds on my girl, I will, with pleasure, consent to your union; and afterwards, my young friend—fight for fortune !”

Scarcely

Scarcely could Frederick find words to thank the worthy Booyers for his generous consent, which raised a hope, that his father, who possessed nearly eight thousand a year, might be prevailed on to part with the sum proposed.

He wrote to Sir Arthur immediately: of his uncle's concurrence, he entertained not a doubt; and impatiently waited the answer which would, as he imagined, confirm or destroy the happiness of his life.

At last it arrived—and in an instant doomed him to despair! Sir Arthur, after expressing his surprise at the application, reminded him of the Captain's agreement to establish him in life. To him, therefore, he desired Frederick to make his claim;
and

and concluded with expressly forbidding any farther demands.

“Here then end all my flattering prospects of felicity!” sighed Frederick.—
“Unkind father! Unjustly you condemn me to wretchedness, to enrich a son, whose regard, I am convinced, does not exceed, nor perhaps equal—mine. To my uncle I can never apply—he has done too much already.”

He pensively paced the room, when the appearance of the Captain roused him from his disagreeable reflections. The concern he felt was too deeply impressed on his countenance, to escape the observation of his uncle, who, perceiving the letter of his
brother

brother lying on the table, immediately read it.

“ This accounts for your unusual dejection, Frederick,” he said. “ But for what purpose do you want five thousand pounds ? ”

The question brought on an explanation. Frederick ingenuously confessed the state of his heart, and briefly recounted his interview with Ellen and the Lieutenant. The Captain expressed his approbation of his choice, and the conduct of Booyers ; adding, with a smile, “ Your father’s refusal, Frederick, shall never be a hindrance to your happiness. But where is my Ellenor ? I am come to escort her to the Hall, where Sir Henry

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impatiently expects her; Mr. Talton having agreed to remain there till his affairs are finally adjusted."

Mrs. Howard and her friends were soon informed of the Captain's return, and the proposed removal; and, leaving directions for the servants to follow them, they proceeded to the Hall.

Sir Henry received them with open arms, and warmly congratulated his aunt on beholding her once more beneath her paternal roof. He then conducted them to the drawing-room, where they were soon after joined by Mr. Talton and the Captain, who had left them on their arrival. The latter advanced to his nephew, and, presenting him with a writing,

ing,

ing, said, "This deed, Frederick, I had executed whilst at Pembroke; and rejoice it is thus in my power to render you happy, by securing you the means of uniting yourself to an amiable woman. Not that I would have you regard this as my final intention in your favour. The affection and attention I have so many years received from you, I can never recompense: but at my death, or before, if it be requisite, you shall find me mindful of the obligation."

Frederick opened the deed, which secured to him the sum of twenty thousand pounds. "My dear—my generous uncle!" he exclaimed, clasping his hand with grateful affection, "never can I sufficiently acknowledge the many instances

I have experienced of your regard. Poor indeed must be my attempts to thank you; but every act is treasured in the inmost recesses of my heart!"

The Captain embraced him.—“Enough, my dear Frederick: if you be happy, I am fully gratified.”

The worthy Booyers, warmly participated in the joy of the moment; and readily agreed to the Captain's proposal, that the nuptials should take place at an early period.

Sir Henry, at the same time, took the opportunity of presenting Louise and his aunt with the fortunes his father had mentioned. The Captain would have checked his generosity;

rosity; but he declared that the wish of his father should be fulfilled the same as though specified in a legal will. Then gaily turning to Eliza, he continued, "I must now become a suppliant! Will you, my beloved girl, consent to bless me with your hand on the day your friend, Ellen, becomes the bride of Howard?"

"I despise affectation, Henry," answered Eliza: "yet not from me, but my mother, you must receive your answer. If she grant your suit, I will cheerfully attend you to the altar."

"Dearest, best of girls!" exclaimed Sir Henry.—"To you then, my mother, I must now refer."

“And from that saucy smile on your brow, Harry,” said Mrs. Blond, laughing, “I should suppose, you think yourself ensured of success, before you ask. I will not, however, disappoint you: the happiness of Corbet is too dear to my heart.”

“Would you, my dear Madam,” said Talton, “as readily consent to a proposal from me, I should rejoice in depriving Sir Henry of his mother: or rather—as I ever wished—to become his father. As Corbet Hall will so soon own the lovely Eliza for its mistress, I should deem myself inexpressibly happy, would her mother consent to grace the mansion of Talton. I have long regarded Sir Henry as my son; I love your daughter as my
own:

own: and by uniting our families, I flatter myself it would increase the felicity of all."

"A fair proposal!" said the Captain. "Never demur, my dear Mrs. Blond; but accede to it as cheerfully as you did to Sir Henry's."

"This proposal," replied Mrs. Blond, in some confusion, "requires consideration; but my answer shall be sincere."

Mr. Talton urged no farther; and preparations were commenced for the marriages of Sir Henry and Frederick; when, one morning, a servant hastily entered, and announced the arrival of a messenger from Cornwall.

“ From Cornwall !” exclaimed Sir Henry. “ Good God ! what can this mean ? Some fatal accident, I am afraid, has befallen my mother ! Show the messenger up, this instant.”

The servant obeyed, and an elderly countryman entered the room. He advanced with an humble bow to Sir Henry, and, in simple language, informed him, he rented the principal part of the Cornwall estate, belonging to Lady Corbet ; who was then at the old Mansion-house, confined by a fractured arm ; and as the surgeon who attended her, apprehended she was in danger, he thought it requisite to acquaint Sir Henry ; more especially as Lady Corbet, who, he acknowledged, was sometimes delirious, had once expressed

pressed a wish to see him and a gentleman of the name of Talton..

“ I will immediately go to Cornwall,” said Sir Henry. “ The attentions of a son may soothe the anguish which oppresses her. And you, Mr. Talton—will you accompany me?—My mother may be worse than she is represented.”

“ I will readily accompany you, Sir Henry,” said Mr. Talton. “ If I have ceased to regard Lady Corbet with affection, I do not forget the sentiments I once entertained.”

Orders were accordingly given to prepare for their departure, when Sir Henry anxiously inquired the particulars of the

accident which had befallen his mother.

Lady Corbet, who, on quitting the Hall, had designed proceeding to France, altered her resolution before she reached Pembroke; and, crossing the Channel, went to her estate in Cornwall, where she was soon after joined by Mallet, and where she proposed to remain, deeming herself secure from the knowledge of Mr. Talton, till she should learn his farther proceedings; and whence, if she found it necessary, she could instantly fly the kingdom.

Mallet had been with her about a week, the tenant informed Sir Henry, when a disagreement had arisen, which
occasioned

occasioned his abrupt departure. That Lady Corbet had appeared very much agitated, and at last commanded a chaise to be prepared, to convey her to Plymouth; for which place she set out, but had not proceeded more than half a mile, when, by the carelessness of the driver, the chaise was overturned, and her arm severely injured. Lady Corbet was brought, by some country-people, back to the mansion-house, and a surgeon sent for, who on examining the limb, declared there was a necessity to amputate it; but Lady Corbet peremptorily refused to submit to the operation, and desired him to set the bone, which had been broken in three separate places. He obeyed; but a fever immediately followed; and, as he had every apprehension of a mortification

ensuing, he had desired the farmer to hasten and acquaint Sir Henry.

Sir Henry's countenance assumed a more pallid hue at this relation; impatiently he inquired if the horses were ready: and on Mrs. Howard anxiously urging him to take some refreshment before he commenced his journey, he wrung her hand, saying, "I feel your affectionate care, my dear aunt; but at this moment my heart is too much oppressed to let me think of refreshments. Even now—may not my mother be expiring: ere she forgives—or knows how dear she still is to the heart of—her Henry."

Louise regarded Sir Henry some moments,

ments, with an expressive countenance—
“ Let me too, my brother, accompany you. My humble affection will not be rejected, and the approving blessing of a mother may yet reward the years of anxious solicitude, I have experienced.”

“ You could not, my dear girl,” answered Sir Henry, “ support the fatigue of travelling, at the rate I wish to go. Yet follow us—Harland will escort you.” Harland readily consented, and a chaise was prepared, in which they departed, in less than an hour after Sir Henry.

In the mean time, Sir Henry and Mr. Talton travelled with the utmost expedition to Llaugharne, and, crossing the Channel, proceeded towards the ancient
seat

seat of Lady Corbet. They were received by Mrs. Brown, the tenant's wife, who informed them the surgeon's fears were verified; a mortification had commenced, and Lady Corbet, at last sensible of her danger, had, that morning, desired Sir Henry and Louise might be sent for. Though prepared for this intelligence, Sir Henry was still affected on receiving it; he, however, struggled with his feelings, and requested she would inform his mother of his arrival, and his wish to see her, if her spirits were equal to the interview. She soon returned, and conducted them to her apartment. The surgeon and a female attendant were stationed by the bed, on which, supported by pillows, was extended the still beautiful Lady Corbet. The 'fever's hectic glow had succeeded the light bloom
of

of health on her cheek ; and the wild lustre of her eye plainly showed reason retained not its full powers. Sir Henry sprung to embrace her, and in a voice softened by tenderness and grief, breathed a prayer for the continuance of her existence.

“ I little thought, Harry,” she said, after an internal struggle, “ ever to have beholden you again : but retributive justice has overtaken me, and I must submit to my fate !—But where is Louise ?” she impatiently continued. “ Does she despise the sufferings of a mother ; or didst thou enviously wish to deprive her of a blessing ?”

“ Ah, my mother,” answered Sir Henry, “ stab not my heart by such a supposition ;—in a few hours Louise will be here.”

“ And

“ And in a few hours,” repeated Lady Corbet, with energy, “ I may be numbered with the dead !”

“ I do not apprehend your dissolution so soon as that,” said the surgeon ; “ although I thought it my duty to tell you there are no longer any hopes of your recovery. Yet I would wish you not to increase your fever by too much exertion in speaking.”

“ Peace, dotard !” exclaimed Lady Corbet, angrily. “ Without thou couldst bid me live !—But no—no—I must die : there are indeed no hopes for me !—Let me see Talton—they told me he was here.” Her attendant hastened to desire his presence, and the surgeon renewing
his

his request that she might be kept quiet, and as composed as possible, retired; promising to return in the evening. Mr. Talton obeyed the summons. On his approach, Lady Corbet said: "Thou art come then to behold her, who would have injured thee to the utmost—had it been in her power! Rejoice then in my fall—exult over my ashes—and, in the torments I now endure, be fully revenged!"

"Far be revenge from my heart," replied Talton: "to pity and relieve are its dictates; but never to triumph over the fallen or afflicted!"

"Well—well!" said Lady Corbet, with quickness, "I believe thee! Though were revenge thy wish, thou hast it—in
its

its utmost extent! Mallet, — the ungrateful Mallet, has deserted me!—Struck with Louise, and her behaviour on the evening of his detection, he wished the restoration of her fortune; but instead of requesting, he commanded it! Had he entreated—pleaded her claim to maternal attention and justice, I think I should have complied! But, unused to commands, I peremptorily refused him: and, in return, he threatened, by the law's aid, to force me to a restitution of my aunt's fortune! Rendered furious by this insolence, I forbade him my sight; and, without seeking to mitigate my anger, he departed for France. Unable to endure his absence, when my passion abated, I determined on following him; but fate forbade it, and, by means of a menial wretch, has torn the fascinating
joys

joys of life from my grasp, and hurled destruction on my head!" She burst into tears.

"All will soon be over, Harry!—I rejoiced when Corbet died : he loved you—and was beloved : but no one will sorrow or weep for me !"

"Yes—yes, my mother!" said Sir Henry,
"I will sorrow and weep for thee too !"

"Lay me not, I charge you, Harry," she wildly continued, "by Corbet—my ashes must not mingle with his. No, no—in the vault by my father—there I shall rest in peace !" She sunk exhausted on her pillow. Sir Henry anxiously watched the changes of her countenance, whilst Mr. Talton, with pity, contemplated the wretched situation of a woman, he once thought the most perfect of her sex.

A broken

A broken slumber shed a partial oblivion over her senses, and for some hours relieved her from the tortures of remembrance. She awoke more collected, and impatiently inquired if Louise were arrived? The rattling of a carriage round the spacious court, announced her approach, and in a few minutes the agitated Louise was pressed to the bosom of her mother!

“Welcome, Louise!” murmured Lady Corbet.—“Child of affection, though thou hast never been regarded as such—yet I love thee now, Louise.—And art thou the husband of my child?” she continued to Harland.—“Then I will say thou too art welcome. Poor thou marriedst my Louise; I therefore believe thou dost
love

love her ; and let not the remembrance of her mother ever induce thee to slight or condemn her. Mine was the vice—be mine the shame : if aught can ever be reflected from Louise ! But no—no ; the virtues of my Louise, like the beams of the morning, shall rise superior to the darkness of her parents actions !—Dark, indeed !” she repeated, with a convulsive sigh.—“ For we deserted thy infant innocence ! Yet forgive me, Louise—curse not my memory ; I will make thee rich amends for the injuries I have done thee !”

“ Name not injuries, my mother ;” sobbed Louise ; “ all is rewarded by this moment of affection ! My love, my duty shall prove me worthy of it.”

“ I shall

“ I shall not experience them,” said Lady Corbet, wildly. “ The icy finger of death has marked the hour of my existence!”

“ Not so—my mother,” replied Louise, attempting to speak with cheerfulness. “ My hand shall minister to thy wants; my arm support thee; affection will teach me the means of relieving thy anguish; and in the bosom of her Louise, my mother shall yet find peace and happiness!”

“ Peace and happiness !” repeated Lady Corbet, frantically. “ Oh, torture me not, by placing to my view blessings I must never enjoy ! In thy bosom, peace and happiness may dwell, but not for me ! Even now the grave is open to receive me,
and

and all beyond is horror ! Thee, I have injured—Corbet and his son—Ellenor too, —Blond and Eliza—shall point the finger of condemnation at me, and say—‘ Not one good action marked her life !’—Oh, let me live—Off with this fractured limb —Tear me to atoms : let me but live to atone for my crimes !—The account is too dark to answer before the Judge I have offended !”

Louise shrunk aghast from her frantic mother, who, with convulsive eagerness, attempted to tear the bandages from her arm.

Sir Henry endeavoured to restrain her. —“ This must not be, my mother, you hasten the dissolution you so much dread.”

“ Hence,

“Hence, audacious boy!” she angrily exclaimed. “Darest thou lay the hand of violence on thy parent! Now, indeed, thou meritest the hatred I have shown thee! Yet stay—stay: let me not add another sin to the number of my account! I believe thou lovest me, thou hast oft evinced it. Yet, not to thee can I fly for consolation; the injuries I have done thee, are too numerous, and alone sufficient to overwhelm me with perdition!”

Mr. Talton drew her fevered hand from Sir Henry’s, and gently pressing it, said, “Raise your heart in prayer, Lady Corbet, and seek for consolation in the mercy of Heaven!”

“Can

“ Can I form a prayer—or ask a blessing,” said Lady Corbet, “ when every action of my life is marked with vice? No, no—there is no mercy for me—I never afforded it!”

“ Lay your crimes at the feet of your Saviour,” replied Mr. Talton, solemnly: “ remember, he died for the sinner: and the first tear shed, of true repentance, restores you to the bosom of your God!”

The frenzied eye of Lady Corbet rested with piercing keenness on that of Talton. “ Repentance!” she ejaculated, “ Oh, if that will avail me, deeply indeed will I repent. Yet save me—save me: let me not die! I will be patient—calm. But send for the surgeon; I no longer dread a

mutilated frame: and it may not yet be too late to preserve existence!"

Sir Henry hastily rose—"I will seek the surgeon this instant——"

"Not you, Harry!" cried Lady Corbet, extending her hand to detain him. "Quit not my sight.—Little as I have loved you through life, I wish not at this moment to be deserted. Yet, send for the surgeon—and be quick; let me but live, and I will atone for all!"

Harland perceiving Sir Henry's distress sent a servant, who soon returned with the surgeon. On being informed of Lady Corbet's determination, he shook his head, saying—"It is now, I am
afraid,

afraid, too late. Had she submitted to the operation at first—all had been well.”

Anxiously Sir Henry watched the intelligence of his eye, as he examined her arm, and with a sigh received the account. It was, indeed, not only too late to amputate the limb ; but her state was such, that the succeeding day would be the utmost limit of her existence !

A groan burst from the bosom of the wretched patient, who, in agonized frenzy, alternately entreated the surgeon to save her, and implored the mercy of Heaven. Medicine was administered to compose her, which, in some degree, had the effect ; and the remainder of the day and follow-

ing night passed in broken slumber and prayer.

The ensuing morning, on awaking, she perceived Sir Henry and Louise kneeling by her bed; and, regarding them some moments, with a tremulous voice said—
“ And dost thou, Harry, kneel to Heaven, to intercede for thy guilty parent?—
Oh God! accept his prayers, though mine be rejected! and for each ill I have—and would have done him, shower a blessing on his head! But I must be quick. Reason totters, and life beats uncertain at my heart. Talton—Harland—come hither. Pursue not Mallet. The wealth he has taken—let him retain! Let Louise’s fortune be restored, and the rest of my property equally divided between her and her brother—

brother—except my picture; which, Talton, I would wish you to have; and, when you view the resemblance, let pity draw a veil over my vices, and waft a prayer to Heaven—they may there be forgiven!—Pray for me, my gentle Louise!—Harry, forgive thy mother. Leave me not whilst a symptom of life remains; bear with my wanderings, and whilst I have sense to give it—receive a last blessing!”

—Life, however, was not so near its close, though it fluctuated in its channels. Repeated faintings prepared them for the last awful moment. Sir Henry and Louise, as Lady Corbet had requested, never left her; and evening was fast closing as she faintly grasped the hand of

Sir Henry—drew him nearer to her, and, sighing a broken prayer—expired on the bosom of Louise!—

CHAPTER VI.

A PIERCING scream from Louise, as she sunk insensible by the side of her mother, roused Mr. Talton and Harland from a serious reflexion on the object before them. The Lieutenant gently raised and conveyed her to an adjoining room, where, by the assistance of Mrs. Brown, life soon returned. He attempted not to restrain the first effusions of filial sorrow; the heart of Louise, he knew, was the seat of sensibility; but fortitude and religion

were likewise its inmates. In the latter she found a resource; and he had soon the satisfaction of seeing her features impressed with a mild though sad serenity.

Sir Henry and Mr. Talton, in the mean time, silently retired to pay that tribute to the memory of Lady Corbet, she had not altogether merited; but, to Sir Henry, the last moments of her life had atoned for her preceding conduct: nor could Mr. Talton retain a spark of resentment for her ungenerous behaviour to himself: over her actions he drew the veil of oblivion, and gave a sigh and tear of pity to the untimely close of her existence.

The next morning he conferred with Sir Henry, and, at his desire, undertook
the

the care of the funeral. As Lady Corbet had requested, her remains were conveyed to Holly seat, and deposited in the vault, by her father. Mr. Talton, Sir Henry, and Harland attended ; nor would Louise be debarred from paying this final mark of respect to her mother ; and a last tear fell on her coffin, as she silently preferred a prayer, that, with her ashes, the remembrance of her vices might be for ever buried from the world !

With minds depressed from the scenes they had so lately witnessed, they were reconveyed to Corbet Hall, where, to the surprise of Sir Henry, he was informed the Captain and Frederick were at Sir Arthur Howard's.

Two days, indeed, after he set out for Cornwall, Frederick received a letter from Lady Howard, to acquaint him with the death of his brother, who, in hunting, had been thrown from his horse, and killed on the spot: and, as the violence of Sir Arthur's grief, at this untimely loss of his favourite son, had brought on a severe illness, she had written to request his immediate presence, with that of the Captain.

They accordingly took a hasty leave of their friends, and returned with the messenger to Howard Hall, where they were received by Lady Howard, and an affecting interview took place between her and her son: nor was the Captain unwelcomed; she had ever felt for him with the affection of a sister; but, as duty was
her

her first consideration, yielded to the imperious commands of her husband, that he should from that time be regarded as an alien to the family.

Sir Arthur, she informed them, was still confined to his bed; the violence of his grief, which they at first apprehended would have destroyed his reason, had exhausted itself; and he was then sunk into a gloomy sorrow, which threatened to retain a longer influence on his mind; the arrival of the Captain and Frederick (now the heir to his title and estates), she, however, hoped, would not only rouse him from an unavailing grief, but be the means of effecting a perfect reconciliation between them.

Lady Howard was right. The attentions of his brother and son proved highly gratifying to Sir Arthur, who, in a few days, consented to rejoin his family.

The long-neglected Frederick now appeared to gain an interest in his heart; though a sigh oft swelled his bosom at the recollection of the deceased Arthur: but, the rising gloom was ever carefully dispelled by the lively Theodosia, to whom, since the death of his son, he had behaved with an unwonted show of affection.

Six weeks passed, when the Captain proposed returning to Corbet Hall; and, knowing the anxiety which preyed on Frederick's mind, respecting Ellen, he took an
oppor-

opportunity to mention his engagement with her, to Sir Arthur: who, contrary to his expectation, readily gave his consent to their union. When a boy, he said, he had been intimate with her father, who once saved his life; and as her family was good, indeed noble, he would wave the consideration of the fortune Frederick, as his heir, had a right to expect with a wife. He could not, however, he added, consent to his leaving him entirely; he should pass at least half his time, till his marriage, with him. To this, Frederick cheerfully agreed, and, a few days after, returned with the Captain, to Sir Henry's.

During their absence, Mr. Talton had so far improved his suit, that Mrs. Blond consented again to enter the marriage state.

state. The late Sir Henry, she frankly told him, was the only man she had ever loved. The virtues and amiable disposition of Blond had merited her esteem and sincerest friendship; those she had still to give, but nothing farther: her affections were buried in the tomb of Corbet. The gift, he felt, was still too valuable to be rejected; and he doubted not he yet might realize the scenes of domestic happiness he had formerly planned.

As the marriages of Sir Henry and Frederick had been deferred, on account of the decease of Lady Corbet and young Arthur, it was agreed that, at the time again appointed for that ceremony, Mrs. Blond should likewise yield her hand to
Mr.

Mr. Talton. Edward sighed as he heard these arrangements; and the Captain, with concern, perceived his increasing dejection at his unsuccessful inquiry after the fair Unknown, for whom he had in vain searched the greatest part of Caermarthen. He then declared his intention of going to Oxford; to inquire if perchance any of his acquaintance had seen her since he quitted the University? The Captain could not oppose his determination, and as Louise and Harland were going to London, to St. Ledger's, they accompanied him to Oxfordshire, having promised Sir Henry to return to Wales, before the time appointed for the marriages.

In the mean while, preparations were forwarded for that occasion. Frederick,
as

as his father had desired, passed a considerable part of his time at Howard Hall. Sir Arthur's regard for him appeared daily to increase, and on Frederick expressing a wish that he would honour the nuptials with his presence, he instantly complied; and, with Lady Howard and Theodosia, accompanied him to Sir Henry's. The arrival of Harland and Louise, with the St. Ledger family, added to the pleasure of their society. Edward only was absent, who continued a fruitless search, till the day preceding that fixed for the union of his friends, when he arrived, so apparently ill, that the Captain began to be seriously alarmed.

Edward endeavoured to rally his spirits; and on Sir Henry and Frederick's joining him,

him, to chide his long desertion, with forced cheerfulness, answered their good-humoured reproaches, and prepared to attend them to the drawing-room. The Captain introduced him to their several friends; but on presenting Theodosia, Edward, with exulting transports, exclaimed—"O God, my father! it is my unknown——it is——"

"Theodosia, the daughter of Sir Arthur Howard," interrupted the Captain, with vivacity. Sir Arthur, hearing his name, advanced, and instantly recognised Edward, to whom he proffered his hand, and, reminding him of the accident at Oxford, renewed his thanks for the service he had rendered his daughter.

"Your

“Your thanks, I am afraid, Sir Arthur,” said the Captain, with a smile, “will not sufficiently recompense my son for that evening’s adventure. He loves your daughter, and has for some months been seeking her. You know my fortune; if, on a farther acquaintance, you approve him for a son-in-law, he shall have half at his marriage, the remainder at the decease of myself and his mother.”

Sir Arthur paused a moment—but the offer was too advantageous to be rejected, and he readily acceded to it.

“But what says Theodosia?” asked the Captain. “Without her consent, ours are of no effect.”

“Her

“ Her consent!” repeated Sir Arthur.
“ She shall consent! Let her refuse if she dare : I will not again be fooled !”

Theodosia attempted not to reply ; the deepest confusion oppressed her ; yet she withdrew not her hand from Edward, but with a timid interceding glance, raised her eyes to her father. The flush of anger was fast crimsoning the cheek of Sir Arthur, at the idea of her not according with the proposal of her uncle, when Lady Howard joined them, and tenderly taking the hand of her daughter, said---“ Have some consideration, Sir Arthur, to the delicacy of my girl. Disobedience to a father she truly loves, is, I am certain, far from her heart or wishes ; but on this subject, unprepared as she was, no
answer

answer could be so proper as her silence. Your nephew has sincere friends in his cause, and, aided by time, need not despair of success."

To her mother, Theodosia had mentioned the attention of Edward, when at Oxford, and their subsequent interview in Wales; pourtraying him in such favourable colours, and dwelling on each word and incident with such pleasure and minuteness, as showed he had made no inconsiderable impression on her heart.

She now directed a look of grateful acknowledgment to Lady Howard, for the relief she had afforded her, whilst Sir Arthur, in a milder tone, replied: "Well—well, Madam, you may be right; but
you

you know I do not like to be trifled with."

This discovery, as unexpected as pleasing, added to the happiness of every individual; nor was Edward long in obtaining a confession; her affections were too nearly interested in his favour, to let duty have the merit of her compliance with the wishes of her father.

At last the morn so ardently expected, arrived! The tenants of Sir Henry, who the same day attained his one-and-twentieth year, assembled on the lawn, and proceeded with them to church, where Sir Henry, Mr. Talton, and Frederick, received the hands of their destined brides. Nor would old Thomas be denied the gratification

tification of attending his master on this occasion, at which no one more sincerely rejoiced : he appeared to have shaken off the infirmities of age ; and after the ceremony, joining the tenants, conducted them back to the lawn, where a noble banquet, by order of their generous landlord, added to the pleasure of the peasantry ; and a rural ball concluded the day, in which Sir Henry and his friends did not disdain to join.

For three weeks the Hall and Mr. Talton's house were proclaimed open as the hearts of their owners ; and at the expiration of that time, the whole party proceeded to the seat of Sir Arthur, where he yielded to the solicitations of Edward, and resigned the hand of Theodosia. The liberality

berality of the Captain on this occasion awakened the generosity of his brother, and Howard Hall for some weeks vied with the hospitable mansions of Corbet and Talton. Sir Arthur did more—he insisted on resigning the family seat to Frederick and Ellen; himself retiring, with his Lady, to a smaller one he possessed within less than a mile, where, as he said, he could daily visit or be visited by them.

Another month, however, elapsed before they thought of separating; and then with an unanimous promise of frequently visiting each other.

Harland and his Louise returned to Harland Hill, where, a few months after,
she

she made him the exulting father of a lovely boy. This circumstance endeared her not only more to him, but to his parents; at whose request he relinquished the service, and consented to reside with them. The amiable manners of Louise had imperceptibly softened the impatience and harshness of his temper, and his increasing tenderness as a husband and father, fully justified her in the choice she had made.

Captain Howard purchased an estate near Sir Henry and Mr. Talton's; and in the society and affection of his Ellenor found an ample recompence for the years of unhappiness he had experienced on her account. Edward and Theodosia, at his desire, consented to reside beneath

neath his paternal roof : whilst Sir Arthur, who since the death of his son had shown an unusual urbanity of disposition, again regarded him with fraternal kindness, which was returned with the sincerest friendship by the Captain.

Time softened the sorrow of the worthy Booyers for the loss of Hannah ; and, though he ever dwelt on her memory with tenderness, he no longer felt those poignant emotions, the remembrance or mention of her would at one time have occasioned. Frederick, with a delicacy equal to his regard, presented him with an estate adjoining Howard Hall, which produced him an easy competence : from the happiness of Ellen he derived his own, and in her children found a source of amusement for his declining age.

Mr. Talton was justified in his choice of Mrs. Blond ; nor had either of them cause to regret the day on which they were united. So far from deeming her remembrance of Corbet or Blond a slight to himself, he would join her in the praise he thought justly due to their merits. This behaviour increased the regard of his wife ; and if a sigh sometimes obtruded for their unhappy fate, the recollection of Talton never failed to restore her cheerfulness.

For Mrs. St. Ledger (the once unfortunate Sister Françoise), Louise retained the sincerest regard ; whilst the friendship of that amiable woman fully recompensed her for the loss of her mother.—Three years after her marriage, the Marquis de Valois and his family returned to France, whether

whither Harland attended his Louise, and they passed some months at the seat of that nobleman. On their return to England, in which they were accompanied by the Marchioness and her daughters, they were surprised, on entering Abbeville, by the appearance of Mallet; his dress immediately informed them he was in the service of the French Monarch, though in the lowest rank. He as instantly recognized Louise; who, with mingled sensations of pleasure and grief, received his embrace. He had, on quitting England, proceeded to Paris, where the gaming-table soon despoiled him of the wealth he had obtained from Lady Corbet. He then for some time gained a precarious livelihood, by practising those wiles by which himself had been de-

frauded ; but being detected, was obliged to fly, and as a last resource for the preservation of existence, had taken up a musket. These adventures, glossed over with the title of misfortunes, fully awakened the pity of Harland, who readily complied with the wish of Louise, to settle an annuity on him for life ; he would have urged his return to England, but Mallet declared his resolution never to revisit his native country. He had, he said, since the death of Lady Corbet, entered into other engagements, which he by no means wished to break, though he declared himself extremely willing to quit the army. They accordingly procured his discharge, and presenting him with a sum of money for immediate use, he set out for the south of France, where he proposed

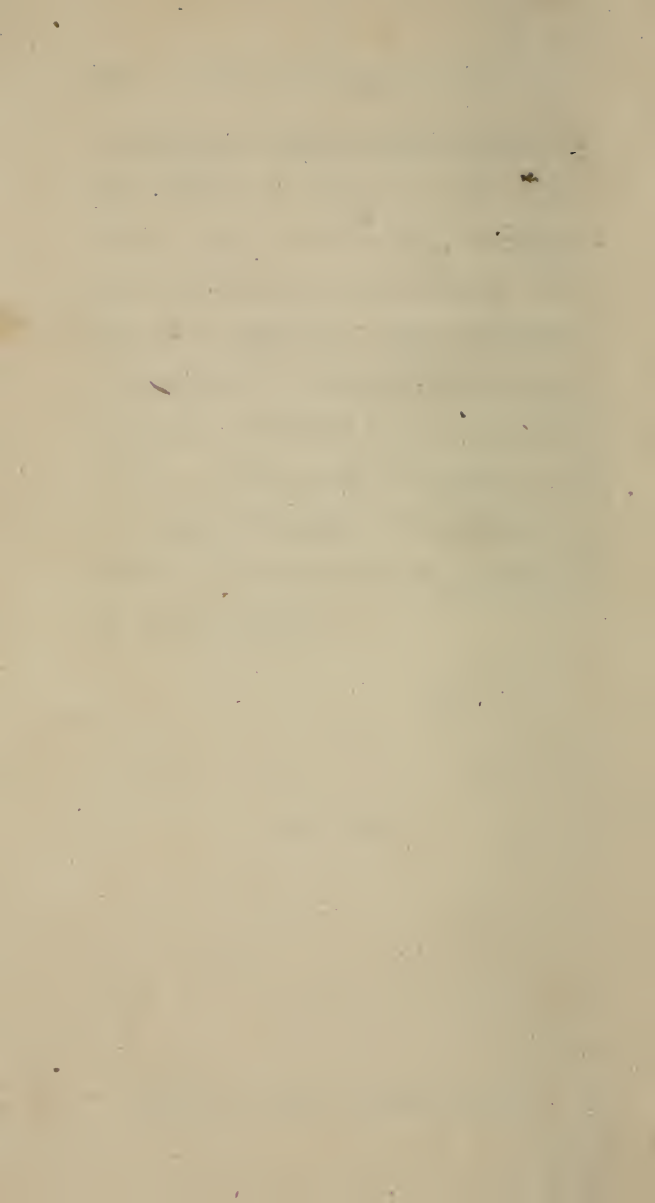
posed to fix his residence, whilst Harland and Louise continued their way toward England, where the society of her friends soon obliterated the painful remembrance of an unworthy parent.

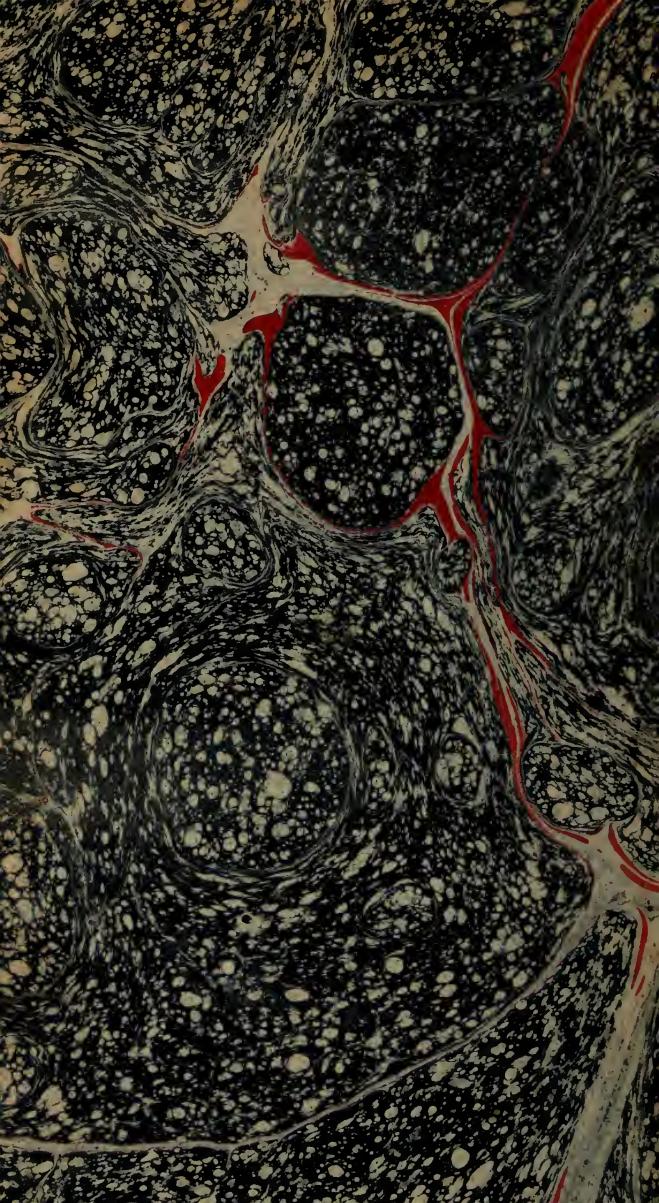
Old Thomas, at his earnest solicitation, still continued with Sir Henry; who, feeling himself indebted to that faithful servant for the restoration of his fortune, would have made him independent: but no consideration could induce him to accept of any reward which should separate him from his master; with whom he begged he might pass the remainder of his days. Sir Henry yielded to his wish; and by every indulgence strove to requite the services he had rendered him.

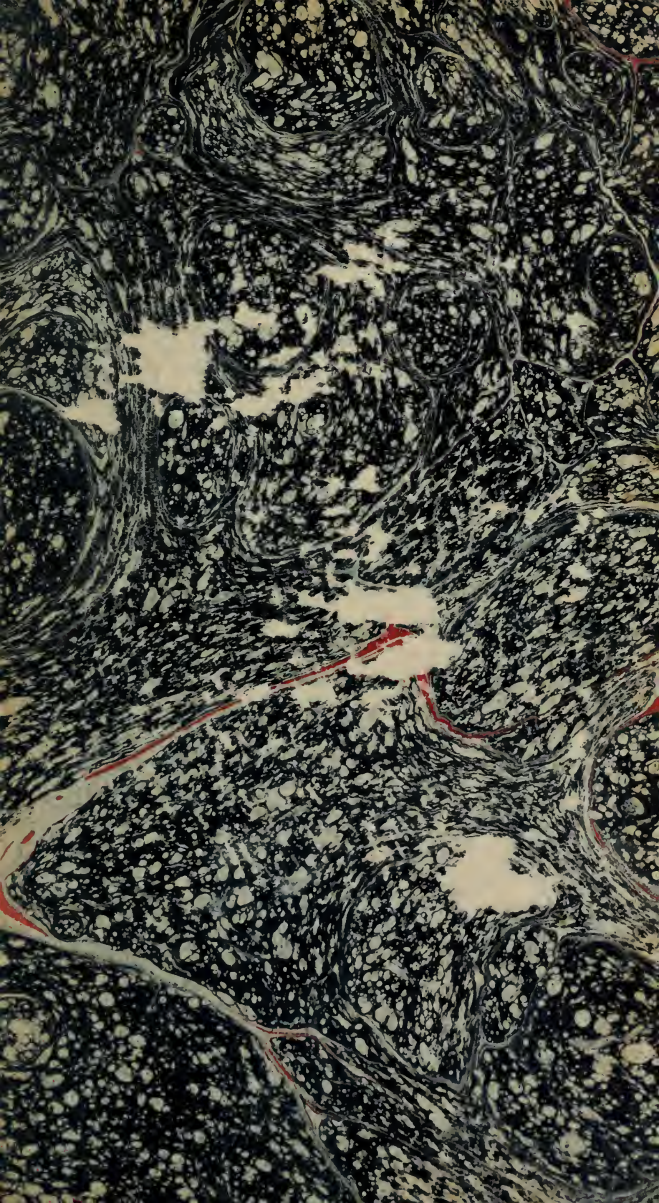
Sir

Sir Henry, satisfied with his own conduct, could look back on every action without regret, and to each succeeding day with confidence and pleasure. Re-
vered by his dependants, and esteemed by all who knew him, he experienced the true delight of a benevolent heart; whilst in the affection of Eliza and his children, and the warm attachment of his friends, he found a recompence for the sorrows he had formerly known.

THE END.



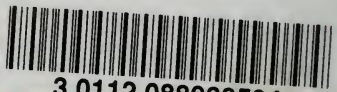




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